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RELIGION AND MODERN THOUGHT

BY

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PREFACE

THE Essays which make up this volume were written at different times and for various occasions during recent years. Four of them have already appeared in print. The one on 'The Influence of Kant on Religious Thought' was originally published in the *Hibbert Journal* under the title 'What do Religious Thinkers owe to Kant?' The first part of the article on 'Religious Experience and Theological Development' was published in the *American Journal of Theology*, and that on 'The Problem of the Personality of God' in the same magazine under its new title of the *Journal of Religion*. The essay on 'Theological Doctrines and Philosophical Thought' was one of the papers issued in connexion with the Quincentenary of St. Andrews University. Thanks are due to the respective editors for permission to republish these articles.

As these essays were not originally written as parts of a systematic treatise, it has not been possible to avoid some slight repetition where the subjects discussed touched on one another. But,

after all, this may help to emphasise certain lines of thought, and no paper traverses the same ground as another.

The title chosen for the volume, though it forms the heading of no single essay, indicates the general spirit and motive of the work. In one form or another the problems dealt with are those which modern thinking raises in reference to religion and theology. And there is need at present of a full and frank discussion of these questions. For our age is one of mental perplexity and unrest, and there is much dispute and doubt about the truth and value of what is traditional in theory and in practice. This temper is very apparent in the attitude of many to time-honoured religious opinions and institutions. As a rule they are not hostile to religion in itself, but they desire to see religious ideas and doctrines revised and brought into harmony with modern thought. This tendency has been accentuated by the wide unsettlement, social and intellectual, due to the war and its effects. The underlying need which here expresses itself is real and intelligible, and it was much before the mind of the writer. How far he has been able to say what is helpful and suggestive on these matters is left to the judgment of the reader.

G. G.

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RELIGION AND MODERN THOUGHT

I

THEOLOGY: ITS TASK AND ITS PRESENT PROBLEMS[1]

IT is with mingled feelings that I begin my work as a teacher in the ancient University where I was once privileged to be a student. A generation has passed since then; but the memories of youth remain, and the vision of the "little city worn and grey" and the "college of the scarlet gown" has often brightened the intervening years. Of those who taught here fully thirty years ago few indeed remain: the great majority of them have finished their labours and entered into rest. The lot of the undergraduate in the days of which I speak was simpler, and the interests and amenities of student-life were less varied. And perhaps there were elements of good in this. But on the

[1] Inaugural Address on entering on the Professorship of Divinity in St. Andrews University.

other hand the University is now far better equipped and staffed, and the possibilities of a liberal education for those who will to learn are greatly increased. One of the vivid memories of my youth is the stately figure of Principal Tulloch, a man who by his impressive personality and teaching was a living influence for good on the future ministers of the Church. It is not without a sense of humility that I return to the ancient city to fill the Chair which has been adorned by Tulloch, Cunningham, and Stewart. The times are not auspicious for the higher studies: the minds of men are distracted by mighty events, and the gloomy shadow of a devastating war broods over the land. But the darkness will lift by and by, and in calm days, when we enjoy once again the blessings of peace, our colleges will continue their work with new earnestness and hope. Let us trust the time of revival will come soon.

I wish to use the opportunity given me to-day to say something on Theology, on the nature of its task and its present problems. It has not been unusual for scientific and philosophical thinkers to look askance at Theology as a discipline devoid of scientific value. An American writer has told us how, when he was conversing with a university magnate, the latter on discovering he was a professor of Theology, promptly remarked: "You have my sincerest sympathy." This ready sym-

pathy was due to the speaker's belief that the modern theologian was labouring on a structure the basis of which had been thoroughly undermined. His labour therefore was vain. For various reasons I do not share this persuasion, though it is right to admit that the attitude of many modern thinkers to the theology of the Churches is unsympathetic. Nevertheless the enlightened theologian, whose vision is not bounded by hard and fast prejudices, can still find comfort in his cause. There are hopeful tokens around, if one has the eye to see them. Religion does not grow old and vanish. Whatever may be the case with the doctrinal forms through which men seek to interpret the religious experience, that experience itself is a vital and enduring fact in human history. The spirit of religion — that spirit in virtue of which man can win no full satisfaction in his earthly environment, but is constantly impelled to seek a ground of faith and hope in the invisible world—does not perish. The truth is, that if it beats feebly in one age it victoriously asserts itself in another, and it will continue so long as man cannot live by bread alone. The persistence of this upward movement of the human spirit, amid all the shocks and changes of human history, is, rightly regarded, an eloquent testimony to the high destiny of man. A being who is inwardly urged to transcend the world of sense

can be no mere product of material elements. Hence it is of the first importance that the theologian should recognise that what is essential and fundamental in religion is the religious experience itself. For it is out of this experience that beliefs and ideas, doctrines and dogmas, gradually shape and define themselves; and apart from it they would be dead and valueless. It will always remain a signal merit of Schleiermacher, that in the early part of last century he recalled religious thinkers from the shadowy realm of speculative abstractions, and made them realise the living significance of the Christian consciousness, and especially of those pious feelings which were the common heritage of the Christian Churches.

To understand better the task of Theology let us consider how it originates.

Though feeling lies nearest the centre of the religious consciousness, it is not by itself the sufficient reason of religion. Psychologically regarded, pure feeling in complete separation from thought and will tends to become an unreal abstraction. Even in the most elementary forms of religious experience feelings only operate and acquire meaning through beliefs and ideas. The desires and emotions which move the primitive worshipper would have no religious value were they not defined and referred to objects through his beliefs. If we describe the subjective side of

religion by the word faith, then faith at every stage involves a cognitive element. And as the religious consciousness develops, this cognitive element plays an increasingly important part. At first largely instinctive, belief becomes more and more the conscious expression of individual will, and imparts a growing content to its object through the values realised in the personal and social life. At the earlier levels of religious development the objects of faith receive determination through an unreflecting and relatively unchecked use of images and analogies. But when religion becomes a national concern, and the needs of a common worship are more pressingly felt, it is necessary to set limits to the imagination, and to lift floating religious beliefs to the status of deliberate and clearly defined doctrines. If there were no such doctrines, an intelligent and consistent system of social worship would not be possible. So regarded, doctrine does not appear to be an excrescence on the religious experience, but is the inevitable outcome of that experience. To quote some relevant words of Sabatier: "Men forget what religious history teaches most clearly, that it is religion which produces dogmas, and that it produces them naturally as a tree produces leaves and fruit." The mistake, as Sabatier notes, is when people come to suppose that religion is produced by doctrines instead of doctrines by religion. But

though doctrine is a derived result, it is not on that score inessential, and no developed religion can dispense with doctrinal statements. In fact every progressive and missionary religion must have distinctive tenets by means of which it expresses its meaning and states its claims, and these it will strive to communicate to the world.

The general principles which govern the development of religious doctrine are illustrated in the highest and most spiritual religion: in Christianity. The beliefs and ideas which gathered round Christ and His work gradually assumed a definite form; and in the Epistles of Paul and in the Johannine Gospel the foundations of doctrine are already laid. Then as the new spirit which glowed in the hearts of the primitive disciples went forth to overcome the wider world, as it encountered strange beliefs and also hostile doubts, men realised the urgent need for further definition and explanation. The extraordinary vitality of Christian faith made it the more necessary to safeguard its content and to resist perversion of its meaning; hence the impulse towards a more precise formulation of its doctrines. For the achievement of this task the environment of the Church, offering the use of a subtle and flexible language, and pervaded by Greek philosophical conceptions, was singularly favourable. The elaboration of doctrine is made possible by the process of conceptual thinking, and

implies a work of analysis, comparison, and distinction. To acquire universal currency, the values realised in the Christian experience seemed to call for conceptual articulation, and the response to the demand was ready. In the foreground stood the problem of stating the relation of Christ to God. This restless activity of thought directed on the content of the faith was not without difficulties and dangers, as the rapid rise of heresies proved. The situation was critical: if the unity of the Church was to be maintained, a more definite formulation and a fuller articulation of the Church's creed were necessary, and an authoritative promulgation of conclusions became urgent. Doctrines which thus received the official impress of the Church's authority ranked as dogmas of the faith, and the duty was laid on theology of connecting and organising them in a system. The Ecclesiastical Councils furnish the landmarks of the Church's progress in this work. The dogmatic system was thus a later growth; but the claim was always made for it that it expressed the truth of the Christian consciousness and was in harmony with the Christian sources.

It is just on this latter point that some modern writers have felt compelled to enter their dissent. This is notably so in the case of theologians of the Ritschlian school, and in our own country the late Edwin Hatch took up the same ground. The

argument of these scholars is that the original Christian experience was not interpreted but distorted by the application to it of metaphysical terms and ideas derived from Greek philosophy. We are asked to believe that Greek thought proved a *damnosa hæreditas* to the early Church, and led it into a wilderness of barren speculation, where the primitive and simple faith was lost. I confess I find it hard to suppose the theology of the first Christian centuries was so radically mistaken in its task. We must remember that the Christian consciousness was a continuous development, which makes it arbitrary to say so much is primitive and so much an accretion; and, moreover, in this development the later phases may help us better to understand the earlier. Also we have to bear in mind that the Church freely selected theological forms to interpret the values contained in religious experience, and found meaning and satisfaction in these forms. That the spiritual content was unwittingly forced into an alien mould is barely credible. Between the matter of religious experience and the form there must have been some inner affinity, so that men could find in the dogmas of the Church a relatively adequate statement of the import of the Christian consciousness. To say this, however, is not to say that the ancient creeds are a perfect and final presentation of religious truth. They rather stand for a relatively

sufficient expression of Christian faith, an expression which corresponded to the needs and aspirations of a particular age. In the end dogmas are interpretations, and point to a reality which they interpret: they give the historic solutions of problems which have emerged from time to time in the history of the Church. And while, as Lotze has said, they indicate the broad outlines within which the religious representations of individuals should move, in the nature of the case they require modification and restatement in the light of a growing spiritual experience. The history of dogmas is itself a refutation of the claim that they are absolutely fixed and unalterable. It is important that we should take a fair and well-balanced view of the dogmatic systems which we have inherited from the past, claiming neither too much nor too little for them. On the one hand we must not forget that these bodies of doctrine were no arbitrary creations: they were *not* the production of a narrow and bigoted mind which had not the wisdom to know its own ignorance. They were the outcome of a religious experience which they sought to interpret, and they represented an endeavour to meet the needs, intellectual and practical, of an historic Church. Hence, in view of their origin, these historic doctrines have an authority which is different from any merely speculative construction.

They are historic forms in which the Christian consciousness has found satisfaction for its sense of spiritual values. On the other hand it is a fateful error to claim for ecclesiastical dogmas the status of revealed truths; for they involve reflective thinking, and they bear the traces of the philosophical environment of a particular age. What is due to human reflection and speculation can never be immediately revealed: the springs of revelation lie deeper in the religious experience itself.

Nevertheless the modern theologian who seeks to justify his vocation is in a position which is not free from perplexity. While religious experience is not and cannot be stationary, the task of developing doctrine has well-nigh ceased. In the Protestant Churches the Confessions remain practically in the form they took at the hands of the Reforming theologians and their immediate successors. Meanwhile during the last three centuries the world-view, to use a convenient phrase, has been profoundly altered, and difficulties and problems have emerged of which our Reforming forefathers had no prevision. It may be enough to refer to the great advances of science, the new ideas of evolution and historic development, the light which has been shed on religious origins, and the marked progress which has been made in Biblical Criticism. As regards the last, the fact

that present-day students of Biblical literature generally recognise different stages of development, varying types of doctrine, and degrees in spiritual authority, shows how seriously the situation has changed since the early days of Protestantism. The method of constructing doctrine by the colligation of proof-texts has become unsatisfactory, and the authority of the Ecclesiastical Creeds has diminished. In this connexion it is usual for hostile critics to point out that the theology of the Confessions was framed in a very different thought-environment from that which exists to-day. Man has moved into a world full of new ideas and problems, and, we are told, it is inconsistent to find the norm of religious truth in the theology of a past age. To this is added a protest against the illogical method of the theologian. For he stands now on the ground of reason, and now on that of authority, as suits his case; at one time defending a dogma by an appeal to *authority*, and at another striving to show that it is a *reasonable* doctrine.

The foregoing criticism may be in some respects relevant, but it is unsympathetic, and shows a slender appreciation of the historic development. The theologian, in the situation in which he finds himself, can take his stand exclusively neither on authority nor on reason; but he can and ought to seek a working adjustment of the claims of both. As we have already noted, the authority of dogma

can only be derivative: the religious experience is fundamental. Hence when Christian Dogma can be shown to express the meaning and value of the normal spiritual experience which gathers round the revelation of God in Christ, it will possess a distinctive authority of its own. It is idle to say the theologian should make reason his sole test, for pure rationality is an ideal nowhere realised. In daily life a man has constantly to act on faith, because scientific proof is not possible; and, as the late Professor James has said, if we only acted when every reason for doubt was excluded, we should never act at all. The highest objects of religious faith—the character of God, for instance—cannot be made the object of logical demonstration: they rest on postulates of faith. In a universe so imperfectly rationalised as this, it is in no way contradictory that a religious doctrine, which expresses an enduring experience of Christians, should claim an authority which cannot attach to a purely speculative theory. For a form which adequately interprets a working value of the historic life is in process of verifying itself. *Per contra*, it is not inconsistent to seek support for a dogma by showing that it possesses a relative rationality. For faith and reason blend in the attitude of the normal human mind, and these two attitudes ought not to be sharply opposed. *Credo quia absurdum est* is a fanatical utterance which

postulates an inexplicable division in human nature; and the same is true of the saying of Jacobi: "By my faith I am a Christian, by my reason I am a pagan." There cannot be this radical incoherence at the heart of our personal activity, for human nature is a unity. Consequently to show that the doctrines of our faith harmonise with our partially-rationalised world is a natural and necessary tendency of the human mind. When a doctrine is in direct conflict with our knowledge of the world as so far rationally articulated, its authority will decline. That some of the dogmas of the Church have failed to harmonise with the body of modern knowledge, and have lost prestige in consequence, no unprejudiced observer will deny. This holds good of some of the metaphysical and juristic notions which have influenced the form of doctrinal statements; and it is also true of some of the eschatological conceptions which play a considerable rôle in the Confessions. In such cases, even though an ancient dogma is not deliberately discarded, it sinks into the background and ceases to function as a vital element in the religious consciousness. The Christian mind cannot remain uninfluenced by the progress of knowledge, and the values which attach to the different parts of the system of doctrine undergo subtle changes in response to the developing thought of the age. The process is real,

though for the most part silent; and even when there is no visible alteration there is a shifting of stress which is significant.

The new and enlarged world-view, which the last century did so much to shape, has caused fresh problems to emerge before the eyes of the theologian. These problems have become urgent, and those interested in theology must not ignore them. For to do so would be to turn away from the living wants of the time. The answers returned to these problems will go far to make it plain whether there is to be progress in religious thought or not. Without attempting to be exhaustive, I shall specify four questions which seem to call for an answer.

1. In the first place, there is the need of drawing some distinction between what is primary and essential and what is merely secondary in the historic doctrines of the Church. Framed in a pre-scientific age, and dealing with matters of speculation, some of these dogmas never had any close relation to Christian experience, and they have no real influence on the Christian life. They are not fundamental in the sense of entering into the vital substance of the faith. To illustrate what I mean I may indicate the traditional doctrines on the creation of the world and man, and on the origin of moral evil. A few may find the ancient doctrine on these matters satisfying, but certainly

many do not; and it seems important that there should be some explicit recognition on the part of theologians, that these do not enter into the essence of the faith. To insist on their acceptance would be to impose a burden on faith which it is not desirable to impose. Yet a merely negative and critical attitude in religion is apt to be futile, and no spiritual community could hold together without positive articles of belief. And here the theologian who has studied the manifestations of the Christian consciousness and the working of dogmas in the field of history, may be expected to give some indication of those elements in Christian doctrine which are of fundamental and enduring value. Nor should there be any insuperable difficulty in defining the general outlines of the answer to this problem, although there may not be agreement on every point. The essential elements in Christian doctrine must be those which stand in organic relation to the revelation of God in Christ. For this is the living source of Christian experience, which grew out of the persisting consciousness of the reconciling and renewing spirit of God working in man. The gospel of Divine Grace, which received its historic expression in Christ, met the deepest needs of sinful men, and has proved its working value through all the fluctuations of human history. For Christianity is in essence a redemptive religion, and the redeeming

spirit has its vital centre in the life and death of the Son of Man. Accordingly, those doctrines which were the direct issue of this saving experience, and set forth its meaning and value, must be reckoned primary and essential. And in the degree that other doctrines are related to this central fact will they fall to be treated as fundamental. To put the matter broadly: the essential in Christian theology is the expression of that which is living and operative in Christian experience.

2. Keeping in mind the distinction now drawn, we shall be better able to deal with the question of the relation of Christian theology to the doctrines of other religions. This problem has been pressed on the theologian by the great extension of our knowledge of the ethnic religions made during the last hundred years. The old method by which non-Christian religions were treated as examples of the endless errors of the natural man is of course everywhere abandoned; and the unbiased student finds no form of human faith utterly destitute of truth. The idea has value, that the religious experience of mankind forms a developmental process of which Christianity is the fruition and consummation. But a large generalisation like this suffers from vagueness; and the important matter is to know the relation in which Christian doctrines stood to those of other religions, especi-

ally to those in the immediate environment. Is the relation one of independence or of interaction? That some Christian ideas and beliefs were coloured by the religious environment is certain, and it is helpful and suggestive to approach a Christian doctrine by tracing the similarities and differences which are presented in other religions. The *Religionsgeschichtliche* or Religio-historic method has been eagerly taken up and pushed to great lengths by some German theologians, and it often casts an important light on features of Old and New Testament theology. For instance, the primitive conceptions and the ritual of Hebrew religion cannot be studied successfully apart from a knowledge of early religion, and more particularly of contemporary Semitic religion. To some extent this is also true of Christianity, and it is at least suggestive to consider some of the beliefs of the primitive Church in relation to other religious ideas in its environment. What I take leave to doubt is, that this method can take us very far towards understanding what is most spiritual in the religion of Christ. I shall illustrate my meaning by reference to the Pauline theology. Workers of the Religio-historic school try to shed light on Paul's doctrines by connecting them with religious ideas current in East Mediterranean lands. They refer to the language of the Mysteries and to the ceremonies of Initia-

tion; and they point out how widespread were beliefs and rites associated with the notion of the dying and rising god. And it is suggested we have here a key to some of the apostle's characteristic doctrines. The facts are suggestive when we remember the audience to which Paul appealed, and the forms of expression he used were perhaps influenced by the religious customs and traditions of those whom he addressed. But it seems certain that the apostle's main religious principles were not explained by the mystical and semi-magical beliefs which pervaded pagan society. His religious convictions were spiritual and ethical at the core, and they issued from his own experience of a living Christ. Apart from that experience Paul could not have gained his triumphant consciousness of the 'new man' who had died unto sin that he might live unto God. The apostle's was a spiritual faith, and the heart of his religious conviction cannot be understood through the analogies which may be traced in pagan religions. There is a qualitative difference which forbids us to find the sufficient reason of the higher in the lower. And what is true of the Pauline faith is true of Christian doctrine as a whole. What is fundamental in it issued out of the new experiences which had their source in the revelation of God in Christ. The analogies which exist in lower religions do not explain the religion of Christ, but

they are a witness how men were feeling after God if haply they might find Him.

3. I pass now to consider a somewhat different kind of problem which claims the attention of the theologian. Is he to welcome the aid of Philosophy or is he to reject it? If he invokes its aid, what is he to expect from it? Obviously the answer to this question will depend on the character of the philosophy and the nature of its claims. For example, with a materialistic or agnostic type of philosophy theology cannot stand in any fruitful relation, while with idealism in some of its phases it has a natural affinity and sympathy. The form of idealism, however, which claims to present all that is true in religious doctrines in a higher or speculative form, will be treated with some reserve on the part of Theology. For the theologian will be concerned lest the values of the religious consciousness suffer violence at the hands of the speculative thinker who poses as a friend. One naturally thinks here of Hegelianism, and its claim to criticise and purify theological doctrines in order to raise them to speculative truths. But people have grown chary of admitting the claims of Absolute Idealism, at least in any whole-hearted fashion. To rationalise is not the whole of life, and Hegel so magnified the office of thought that he missed the significance of the practical and feeling elements in

piety. A more close and sympathetic relation to the Christian experience is necessary, if we are to do justice to its values. Hence one can understand the meaning of the protest that, in the process of elevating a doctrine to a speculative form, its spiritual value evaporated. After all man does not so apprehend the absolute truth of the universe as to be able to criticise all things in heaven and earth with perfect finality. If this be so, the assertion that the truth of religion is only to be found in a system of philosophy cannot be made good.

In sharp antagonism to the foregoing is the opinion that a system of Theology must be quite independent of Metaphysics. This was Ritschl's standpoint, and it is partly explained as a reaction against the exaggerated pretentions of Speculative Idealism. But it is hardly possible to carry out consistently the principle of rigid independence. There is an affinity between theological and philosophical thinking, and the theology of the Churches reveals the influence of metaphysical ideas. If reason is active in theological construction, it is vain to say that a world-view developed by reason can have no bearing on theology. Consistency between theological and philosophical thought should at least be sought. Any sharp antagonism of reason and faith is false; they are complementary to one another, and they mingle together in

different degrees in all human activity. Philosophy is more a matter of reason, religion of faith, but each involves something of the other. The unity of the personal life forbids any hard and fast separation of the spheres of human activity; and so between the philosopher and the theologian there should be friendly co-operation and criticism, for each can learn something from the other.

It will aid a *rapprochement* between Theology and Philosophy if either frankly recognises the rights of the other. On his part the philosopher must recognise the reality and persistence of that religious experience which is the presupposition of all theological construction. This experience is a normal fact of life, and it demands interpretation. Moreover, the thinker should admit that any attempt at ultimate unification must be provisional: it marks a stage in the developing thought of the world and cannot be regarded as final. On his side, the theologian should admit that his standpoint is limited: he is primarily dealing with a particular aspect of experience. But there is need of bringing his work into a consistent relation with experience as a whole. It is an obligation to try to 'think things together,' and it falls to the philosopher to exercise this synoptic office. A sufficient criticism of the parts is not possible without bringing to bear on them the idea of the whole. When religious doctrines

are examined from the larger standpoint of philosophy, there is one criticism which may be expected and is justifiable. The religious consciousness makes a free use of images and analogies, and these have passed into the body of theological doctrines. This figurative thought is not scientific, and it cannot be perfectly accurate. But for the ordinary religious man the use of images is necessary, and it is a means of representing spiritual values. So, for instance, God is described as a Father. There will always be an element of symbolism in man's descriptions and representations of the invisible things of the spirit, though it is a grave exaggeration to say that dogmas are mere symbols, that is to say, convenient fictions by which we try to express what cannot be an object of knowledge at all. No religious community could maintain itself, if its dogmas meant no more for it than this. On the other hand, the practical religious mind does not demand that its dogmas be free from all theoretical objection: it is enough that they can be taken to express the feeling and value-experiences of the soul. It is likely that the speculative thinker, governed by an interest mainly theoretical, may criticise with undue severity the figurative aspect of theological doctrines. In these circumstances the *Philosophy of Religion* is fitted to exercise a mediating function; for it is, or it ought to be,

alive alike to the demands of coherent thinking and to the historic values expressed in the doctrines of the Church. Hence the importance of this branch of study at a time when it is necessary to treat the historic dogmas of religion in a manner which combines sympathy with criticism. One may hope that a *Philosophy of Religion* carried out in this spirit will do something to promote a fruitful interaction between philosophical principles and religious doctrines.

4. Let me now pass to a fourth problem, a problem in some respects the most difficult of all. I can only deal with it briefly. I refer to the relation in which theological doctrines stand to the principle of development. The question is pressed on the theologian by the high importance the principle acquired during last century, and the fruitful applications it received in the domains of science, history, and institutions. The old static idea of stereotyped forms has been abandoned, and it has become an element in scientific method to regard objects from the evolutionary point of view. The conception of evolution has been very prominent in the field of biology, but it has attained almost equal currency in the spheres of religion, language, and law. Nor ought there to be any special difficulty in granting that the method has an application to religious doctrines, for it is quite common to speak of the "develop-

ment of dogma." The point is, in what way and how far does the principle apply in this case?

In the present connexion we have to remember it is a normal feature of the religious consciousness to claim truth for its beliefs; and, in the creed-building ages, when these beliefs were precisely stated and systematised, it was more easy and natural than it would be now to claim absolute validity and finality for them. And we feel it would be hard for a Church to hold together, if it put forward a purely provisional and tentative creed. Men crave for certainty in things spiritual: to offer them only probability is to give them a stone for bread. To many minds there is something fascinating in the claim of the Romish Church to absolute authority and finality in matters of faith. One recalls how the perplexed spirit of Newman reached peace and assurance when he crossed to the Church of Rome, and found there the 'home after many storms.' "It was," he tells us, "like coming into port after a rough sea; and my happiness on that score remains to this day without interruption." Yet Newman's 'infallible authority' was itself a product of a general development, and there is something contradictory in the idea that a product of development should be raised above the limitations implied in development.

I shall be told that the Roman Catholic Church is not hostile to the principle of development, that

it has, in fact, a theory of development. This is true; but the theory is quite inadequate, and excludes the possibility of a modification and reconstruction of doctrine due to a living interaction of religious faith with advancing thought and experience. What is once taken up into the structure of the Catholic faith can neither be altered nor discarded. Development can only mean a process of explicating, defining, and giving fuller statement to elements which are 'preformed' or contained in general in the original Deposit of Doctrine. This conception of development is thoroughly artificial, for all real growth presupposes an action and reaction upon an environment. Similarly, a true spiritual development involves interaction with the thought of the age, criticism, and reconstruction. And it is highly significant that, within the bosom of the Church of Rome, there should have arisen the phenomenon called Modernism, which repudiates the notion of a mechanical growth by explication, and seeks to replace it by the conception of a criticism and reconstruction of dogma in the light of advancing knowledge.

The attitude and temper of Protestantism are more favourable to the idea of development, for the Reformed theologians did not claim that their doctrines were infallible or final. Thus the Formula of Concord expressly states that Confessions have not the authority of a judge; and

Luther himself declared that the articles of faith were to be regarded as a historic confession, not as papal Decretals. So, too, the Westminster Confession recognises that Councils of the Church "may err and many have erred." A frank acceptance of the principle of development would thus be quite in harmony with the spirit of Protestantism, provided that in any such development continuity with the past and consistency with the general Christian consciousness were maintained.

In practice, no doubt, the doctrinal systems of the Reformed Churches have tended to become stereotyped, and attempts at revision have been few indeed. The great advances in knowledge have raised so many problems and changed so many time-honoured beliefs, that in recent times the disinclination to attempt any official modification or revision of the old doctrines is very marked. The multitude of new ideas has produced wide unsettlement of mind, and the work of theological reconstruction is just now extraordinarily difficult. Whether the modern mind will ever favour a serious attempt at framing religious dogmas is doubtful: probably the religious spirit will find its satisfaction rather in reinterpreting the old than in creating the new. The possibility of progress appears to lie more in an effort to simplify and to distinguish between the essential and the secondary; and an endeavour of this kind seems to be

needed if our traditional theology is to be brought into a more vital relation with the Christian consciousness of the time. It would mean a gain for religion if some of the old metaphysical and legal notions, as well as the pre-scientific ideas which have found a place in our Confessional Systems, were officially relegated to the background. For they belong to a vanished world: they cannot be made to live again, and they hinder rather than help faith. On the other hand, along with this liberating process, there must go an earnest endeavour to set what is essential in the forefront of religious faith. The things which really matter most must receive an added emphasis. In this we shall be guided by keeping steadily in mind the vital and enduring elements of the Christian experience. This experience, let me repeat, has its centre and living ground in the revelation of God in Christ, and despite all the chance and change of human things, and through all the passing fashions of an ageing world, it has maintained itself. If depressed and feeble in a secular time, this spiritual experience has never vanished from the world. Cherished by the saints in evil years, it has by and by broken forth into fresh and vigorous life and ushered in the days of spiritual revival. Here is the living core of our Christian faith, and the doctrines in which that experience is enshrined will remain an abiding inheritance of the Christian Church.

II

SOME ASPECTS OF THE PRESENT RELIGIOUS OUTLOOK[1]

DURING the last few years the Western world has been passing through a catholic crisis in its history. The Great War has shaken European society to its foundations, and has left behind it a legacy of poverty, misery, and discontent. Everywhere the strain and stress of the conflict have plunged the nations into new and strange situations, and these have called for fresh and unexpected methods of dealing with them. Men have adapted themselves to changes which a few years ago they would have denounced as radical and subversive: they have seen cherished ideas set aside with something like resignation. Living in the midst of a movement so profound and far-reaching, we are all deeply concerned with the way in which it is to work itself out, with the goal to which it is moving. Are we witnessing the birth-throes of a new and better world, or is this the beginning of sorrows? Some regard the future

[1] An Address to the Church of Scotland Elders' Union, Dundee.

with hope, others with foreboding, but all with anxiety. Voltaire, during the fateful years that preceded the French Revolution, said to the young that if they lived they would see great things. We whose lot is cast on days even more critical share the same feeling. "The veil of the future no man can lift," so it has been said, and it is true even though "the present is great with the future." Yet sometimes we discern the path ahead for a little distance at least; at other times all but the immediate foreground is shrouded from our eyes. We seem to be in the latter condition at present. The situation is so complex, the forces at work so many and various, that, placed as we are in the thick of the turmoil, we can reach no vantage ground from which to cast a large and searching vision on the land ahead.

> "The prophetic soul
> Of the wide world, dreaming on things to come,"

goes forward to far issues, but individuals have to work and strive in the immediate present. Those who seek to fill the rôle of the prophet in these days must prophesy in the absence of any 'open vision': the wise will decline to prophesy.

But, despite the limitations of his foresight, man is essentially a forward-looking being; and he lives and acts in the present with an eye to the future. He has to play a part in shaping the issues of things, and must therefore take stock of

the situation in which he finds himself, and try to gauge its tendencies and possibilities. As a rational being he dare not court disaster by stumbling forward blindly on his way. If this be so, we are bound to study the conditions under which we are living, and try to understand what may come out of them. We shall never make progress by accident: a certain amount of foresight is essential.

Let us then begin by asking what are some of the striking features of the present situation. Beyond question the War, with its far-reaching effects, has greatly intensified, if it has not entirely created, the general unsettlement of men's minds. The normal course of life has been so profoundly disturbed that people have difficulty in finding their bearings. Something has been wrong with the world, we hear it said, and there is a widespread disposition to question the old order of things under which such a catastrophe was possible. Civilisation had somehow gone astray, and it has to be set right. Large ideas of social reconstruction hover before men's minds, and visions of a new order in which old wrongs are to be righted; yet these aspirations fail to embody themselves in schemes which are definite and practicable. You do not solve a problem by a telling phrase. To make the world 'safe for democracy' is a laudable ambition, but then there may be a democracy which is not safe for the

world. It seems that amid the prevailing confusion and distress the great constructive principles have not had time to mature and define themselves, so as to produce conviction and guide endeavour. At present the spirit of criticism is in the air, and the voice of dissatisfaction is constantly heard—dissatisfaction with old methods, old systems, old institutions. This outbreak of the critical spirit may be helpful or it may be dangerous: it will be dangerous if criticism is inspired by passion and prejudice instead of being illuminated by sane and clear ideas.

In the prevailing unsettlement and discontent it was only to be expected that institutional religion would receive its share of criticism. Sometimes this criticism is relevant and therefore helpful, but sometimes it is not. Of the latter type is the assertion that the Christian Churches are discredited, because, despite their labours, national passions and jealousies precipitated the War with all its barbarities. It would be as reasonable to say Christianity is false, because it has not banished sin and selfishness from the world. To fail to accomplish something is not a proof that you are not doing your duty. On the other hand, to dispute the inferences of some critics may be legitimate, yet it should not lead us to ignore the fact that there is discontent with the Churches as institutions and a feeling that

they are for some reason failing to meet the needs of the age. In this connexion a good deal has been made of the attitude of our soldiers who were at the front. The evidence points to a widespread indifference to the Churches. Yet there appears to be little or no hostility to religion in itself, though there is much ignorance in regard to it. But it is hardly possible to draw inferences from this irresponsible and often ignorant criticism as to the kind of reforms which the Churches need. It is easy to cry, "Let us have Christianity without Churches," but do those who say this ever consider whether religion could maintain itself apart from religious institutions? Has it ever done so? If religion is to be a social force, not a vague and shifting sentiment, it must be organised.

From another movement in our midst we may gather more clearly one reason for an unsympathetic attitude to the Church. I refer to the movement, widely diffused in industrial centres, which is roughly termed socialism. The tendency of socialism in this country, if not openly hostile to religion, is at least antagonistic to the Churches as institutions. For socialists regard the Churches as lending support to an order of society which they desire to overthrow, and as unsympathetic to their ideals and aspirations. Socialism as a creed is intolerant and uncompromising; and as the Church has not come over to its side, it stands

aloof from the Church. Socialists have lately taken to instructing the young in their own doctrines, a somewhat ominous step.

To discuss the whole question of the relation of the Church to socialism would take us too far afield. But I may point out that, if Christianity in some ways is not unsympathetic to certain aspects of socialism, the Churches cannot frankly and fully conform to socialistic demands and still maintain themselves as religious institutions. The problem of the redistribution of wealth, however urgent, is not primarily a religious problem, and the Churches could not take it up without entering the arena of party strife and degenerating into secular institutions. The function of the Churches is primarily religious: they are concerned with spiritual values and not with material goods, and regard life here as a stage to a life hereafter. From the spiritual point of view the gain of the whole world will not compensate a man for the loss of his own soul. Religion has always a transcendent reference; and to abandon this and to preach a gospel of material well-being on earth would be fatal to religion.

1. After these preliminary observations let us turn to an outstanding aspect of the religious outlook. I mean the changes of feeling and thought in regard to the religious message of the Churches, changes which have become more and

more marked in recent years. What I have in mind is not so much criticisms of religion as such but criticisms of the way in which it is presented, the doctrines in which it is expressed. It is undeniable that within the last two generations the desire for and interest in the doctrinal statement of Christianity has waned. A long sermon on the 'fundamentals' which would have received an attentive hearing sixty years ago would now be heard with weariness or ill-concealed impatience. For some reason these things do not have the importance for the modern man which they had for his fathers. He no longer believes that correct thinking on religious matters is all important, and is probably inclined to echo the sentiment,

> "For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,
> He can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

Even the uneducated classes have lost much of the old awe and fear which induced them to pay at least an outward respect to 'saving doctrine,' while the intelligent have lost sympathy with the old Calvinism, and feel that it ought to be revised and restated. The attitude I have been describing has been largely due to the changed ways of regarding the Bible and Inspiration which have been the outcome of historical study. There have been a great increase and a wide diffusion of knowledge on the subject of human origins and development as well as about other religions, and all this has

reacted on the attitude of men to the old creeds which grew up in a pre-scientific age. People complain that some of the old doctrinal statements perplex or even repel them. As illustrations one may mention the theology reared on the notion of two covenants, the doctrine of predestination, and of eternal punishment.

Most of us will admit that there is a good deal of truth in this criticism, and agree that doctrines of the kind are a hindrance rather than a help to religion. No doubt one may reply to these objections that these dogmas are now seldom preached, and this is true and a sign of the times. On the other hand, they still form an integral part of the Confession of Faith, and have not been revised or modified in any way. And so long as they occupy their present position they will prove a more and more awkward burden to the Churches. The question of creed-revision is notoriously a difficult one, but, on the other hand, there is a danger in an institution continuing officially to profess doctrines which are out of touch with modern thought, and which few of its members whole-heartedly accept. The religious situation to-day really requires some simplification of the old creed, and the problem should be faced with sincerity and courage. The present unsettlement of ideas with the disposition to question the old order everywhere will force the Churches to con-

sider seriously the things which they are prepared to discard and the things for which they are prepared to stand. Here, however, we must keep in mind how far this criticism really goes. It does not touch Christianity as a spiritual and vital religion; it merely concerns certain ways in which that religion has been expressed and defined in doctrines. To revise a creed is simply to try to unfold better the meaning of religion. And religion itself is always more and deeper than the doctrines in which it is formulated.

So far as the spiritual claims of religion are concerned, there are, it seems to me, hopeful elements in the present situation. There was a period in the latter half of last century when materialistic and naturalistic modes of thought were dominant, and many believed that evolution offered the key to the meaning of the world and man. As a consequence they refused to admit the claims of religion, and were disposed to treat it as an outworn superstition. But now there has been a reaction of thought, and the hard and ungenial atmosphere, so unfavourable to the spiritual values, has passed away. Materialism as a theory of the universe is discredited: evolution is widely recognised to be only a method of interpretation which requires to be supplemented, and in any case can yield no ultimate explanation of experience. Recent investigation shows that the notion of a

continuous and strictly determined process of development is defective, and that room has to be found for the entrance of new and creative factors. A mechanical explanation of things is seen to be partial and quite inadequate. So it has come about that the limitations of scientific explanation are acknowledged, and the truth widely admitted that science cannot discredit the rights of religious experience. Indeed at present among thoughtful people there is a readiness to recognise the reality and power of spiritual elements in the world and life. Men are not disposed to explain away religious experience but rather to try to understand it. The present vogue of spiritualism, despite the credulity and exaggeration associated with it, is a token that even scientific persons are willing to accept as facts phenomena which so far defy any naturalistic explanation. The issue of this whole trend of thought has been to replace the former antagonism to religion by a more sympathetic spirit, a spirit which allows to religion a legitimate place in the great scheme of things. Something similar may be said of the historical criticism of Christianity. That negative criticism of the Gospel history which reduced it to a growth of myth and legend is now admitted to be a great exaggeration which left much unexplained. Critics are now far more inclined to agree that the Christian faith is only intelligible if it developed on a substantial historical basis.

2. But if the intellectual atmosphere has grown more favourable to religion, we cannot say that this indicates an inclination to accept the existing ecclesiastical situation as satisfactory. The broader outlook on religion and the more sympathetic attitude to it have only made thoughtful men and women feel more keenly the estrangements and divisions which separate the Churches. The reasons which keep the Protestant Churches apart appear curiously small to an age which has lost interest in the old quarrels and controversies. This feeling, which was growing, has been accentuated, I think, by the great upheaval through which we have been passing and by the criticism of things established engendered by it. In presence of such great and soul-shaking experiences things that once loomed large in the foreground dwindle and recede; and sectarian differences which at one time meant something tend to lose their importance. The tide of life flows away from them, and men grow indifferent to them. The movement towards Christian union which had been developing in different lands will probably be accelerated by the temper and conditions due to the War. You can maintain differences when people lay stress on them and are prepared to make sacrifices for them: you cannot do it when they have ceased to judge them important.

As regards the ecclesiastical situation in Scotland

and the movement for Presbyterian Church Union, I shall not speak in detail. In this case the distinctions between the Churches, if they once meant much, now mean very little to the mass of the people: in creed, organisation, and worship the Churches are substantially the same. And any one who looks a little way ahead, and appreciates the conditions that will prevail, must realise that it is quite impossible to maintain the existing situation indefinitely, or even for very long. The impoverishment consequent on the War will make it more and more necessary to do away with unnecessary churches, and to reorganise the work of those that remain in the interests of the population as a whole. This rearrangement is called for through the decline of population in country districts and by the growth of great industrial centres: it is demanded in the interests of practical religious work, and can only be achieved on the basis of a union of the Churches. In recent years the Churches have been losing their hold on sections of the people; and without reorganisation they are not likely to regain what they have lost, or even to maintain themselves where they stand. Union will strengthen the hands of the Churches in dealing with the difficult situation in which they find themselves.

The position of the historic creeds in the Church has had to be considered in the present movement

for church-union. These creeds were drawn up at a time when men supposed they could formulate a body of doctrine that was complete and final, and they were accepted by the Churches without provision for alteration or amendment. Accordingly to change or modify its creed exposed a Church to the objection that it was altering the terms of its constitution. The difficulty has been felt by the Free Churches as we know, but perhaps even more by the National Churches. In the latter case a Church, even if agreed that certain modifications of doctrine should be made, is not free to make them on its own authority, for the creed formed part of the terms of its alliance with the State. This limitation is felt by many to be a serious drawback. In England, as you are aware, steps have been taken to claim for the Anglican Church the right of development in doctrinal matters; and in Scotland it is part of the Articles of Union that the United Church should be free to reinterpret and modify the statements in its creed. It is symptomatic of the religious outlook of these times that the most conservative Church, the Church of Rome, has had to meet the same demand as put forward by the Modernist party. In this case the claim made was a very radical one, and the Romish Church has felt itself obliged to reject it. None the less it is significant that it should have been made.

On the whole question I think we must admit that there is substantial justice in the demand for the right to develop in matters of doctrine. A living Church must be a developing Church, and if it is to develop it must have spiritual freedom and autonomy. There need be no hostility to doctrinal religion, for a religion without doctrines would be a vague and nebulous abstraction, something which could neither be taught nor spread. It is clear, however, that a Church is not to be helplessly and hopelessly bound by what men thought in the past. Liberty seems to be essential if the Churches are to express their convictions in their own way and to keep in touch with the growing thought of the world. This is not inconsistent with religious continuity. No student of theology but knows how the early Church appropriated ideas from its environment in order to express its spiritual faith in terms of doctrine, and still maintained the continuity of its spiritual life. And what was possible then is now possible. The continuity of the Christian religion does not lie in certain fixed and unalterable statements, but in the abiding presence of Christ's spirit in human hearts and lives. Spiritual development has its analogy in organic growth, where the continuous life reveals itself through changing forms of outward expression.

3. Let us turn now to another aspect of the

outlook. I mean the work of the Churches and the way in which they are meeting the needs of the time. The subject is not an easy one, and opinions are divided, but the situation is not without hopeful features. The growing stress on practical religion, in other words the demand that religion should at least mean a better life in this world, is reflected in the activity of the Churches. They are at all events trying, whether successfully or not, to elevate the lives of the people. If one were to compare the labours of our Churches to-day with those of a century ago, he would be astonished how this activity has expanded and taken new forms and directions. A hundred years ago the Sunday worship was the one thing of importance. At present, and especially in the cities, a great variety of organisations and associations has grown up in connexion with the Churches, all of them seeking in practical ways to help the people and to promote their higher interests. Think, for instance, of the Sunday-schools, Bible-classes, Guilds, Bands of Hope, Missionary Associations, Musical Associations, Literary Societies, Clothing-Clubs, and Mothers-Meetings which have sprung into existence, and are maintained and fostered by Christian congregations. Some of these organisations may be weak and struggling, and others not so successful as one could wish, but on the whole they are a remarkable evidence of Christian

activity: they certainly do practical and useful work, and reveal the Church's growing concern for the good of men and women. This movement is sound in principle; for there is something false in the idea that there can be an enlightened care for human souls which is divorced from any concern for human bodies and minds. We remember the gracious saying of the Master: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Without practical and sacrificing service such as this the spirit of religion cannot be real: "If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" The union of the religious and the philanthropic spirit is truly Christian, and goes back to the great Founder of our faith. The tree is known by its fruits.

Yet such forms of personal and social service, if they are a part of genuine Christianity, are not the whole of it. Besides work there is worship. Now worship, personal and social, is an element of every true religion, and where the religious spirit is real, it seeks to express itself in some form of worship. What then of the Churches as centres of worship where men hold converse with the Eternal? Are they fully realising their end as places of worship and religious teaching? Probably most people, if this question were put to them, would answer no, and they would speak of the large numbers who

never attend religious ordinances at all. They might illustrate this by pointing to some great industrial centre where multitudes have no Church connexion. I think it cannot be doubted that Scotland was a more church-going country some sixty or seventy years ago than it is now, but I am not sure that it was the case a hundred or a hundred and fifty years ago. Be this as it may, it is futile to deny that there has been a falling away in recent years. The feeling for the sanctity of the Sunday has declined, the old reverence for religious things has decayed; and these changes are reflected in the diminished attendance at public worship. In most churches where there are two services, if the attendance at one service is fairly good, the second is comparatively deserted. How is this slackness to be explained, and how is it to be remedied? One can see, as already suggested, that part of the explanation lies in a change of attitude to the Church. But if we go further and ask what precisely is lacking and what are the remedies, it is very difficult to get a satisfactory answer. From time to time the question is discussed in letters to the newspapers, at religious conferences, and in other ways, but the replies are curiously different and often hopelessly at variance with one another. We are told, for instance, that the reason is the lack of sound doctrinal preaching: return to the fundamentals and all will be well.

In contradiction to this we are informed that the root of the difficulty is, that old doctrines are preached which no longer interest or help people. Others say the clergy are to blame, for they do not practise what they preach; while others think that the need is for brighter and more cheerful services, with plenty of music and very short sermons. But I fear it would serve no purpose to enumerate the various reasons given and the different remedies proposed. Some of them may contain an element of truth, but none of them is sufficient; and in certain cases if one of them is right, another must be wrong. Such explanations are rather symptomatic of the state of mind of individuals, each of whom supposes that his particular difficulty is shared by everybody else.

One thing, however, is not in dispute. It is clear that the services of the Church do *not* appeal to many, and the existence of a great deal of apathy and indifference is undeniable. I cannot pretend to offer any final explanation of the causes which have brought this about: they are, no doubt, complex and far-reaching. I can only suggest one or two considerations which seem to be relevant. In the first place, there is the unsettlement of religious ideas from which our age is suffering, an unsettlement which is making itself felt even among the masses. The consequence is that many regard connexion with a Church as a less urgent and

important matter: they take the view that attendance at public worship is a matter of taste and convenience rather than a duty. In the second place, we must remember that during the last two generations there has been a large increase of wealth coupled with a great multiplication of the goods and enjoyments to which wealth unlocks the door. If life has become more varied, gay, and interesting, it has also grown more materialistic and worldly; and the keen pursuit of money and pleasure has infected all classes. Many devote themselves to sport and amusement with a zeal which they would deem absurd to consecrate to religion. This worldly, superficial, and pleasure-loving life is not favourable to religion, and those who love it commonly care little for spiritual things. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." People to whom this worldly atmosphere is the breath of life turn away from the Church because it has no message for them: they are not really interested in its teaching, and it does not offer them the things they really want. That this selfish and worldly spirit will prevail throughout the future I do not believe. Materialism may have its day, but it brings about its own undoing. The deep need of the soul always reasserts itself, for man 'cannot live by bread alone.' An age of secularism provokes a reaction and with it the renewal of faith.

But some one may ask: Can we do nothing now to bring in the advent of this better spirit? Is there no cure for the present spiritual apathy and indifference? I do not know of any one efficient remedy, but I feel sure that the inherent poverty and unsatisfyingness of a purely worldly life will always in the end disclose itself. Religion springs from an inner need of the soul; and if a man is not conscious of that need, you cannot put religion into him by any external means. You cannot create a vital faith merely by argument, though you may appeal in various ways to a man's better self. In very truth we cannot compel the indifferent to be religious, for religion is rooted in faith and freedom. A man enters the Kingdom of Heaven freely, if he enters at all.

People, we often hear it said, should be attracted to the Churches. Good and well: only let us see to it that the attraction is of a right and legitimate kind, not a foolish bid for popular favour. It would be a fatal policy for the Churches to try to draw people by sensational methods or to seek to entice them by their love of amusement. This must be left to the cinema-house and the variety-theatre. The function of the Church is primarily religious: its object is *edification*, and it cannot abandon this vocation except on the penalty of becoming a secular institution. Whatever difficulties the Church has to encounter, whatever ill

success may attend its efforts, it must continue to stand for religion and the religious view of the world and life. Only thus can it maintain that historic continuity of spirit and endeavour which links the Christianity of to-day to the gospel of Christ and His disciples. A Church will always differ essentially from any secular institution, if it is to be true to the meaning of religion. For the values of religion are not mundane and temporal but spiritual and eternal, and the ultimate goal of the soul is not here but hereafter. Christianity is not indifferent to earthly well-being—far from it; but it teaches clearly that the life here and now is *not* all: it is a spiritual trial and test the issues of which lie in the supramundane realm. If a worldly age does not like this gospel the Church cannot change it for another, or abate its claim in any way, and still be faithful to the revelation of God in Christ. Rather it should strive, through good report and ill, to imbue its members more fully and deeply with this spirit, so that they may shine as lights in the world. On the deep and essential things of faith the Church must concentrate, if it is to make headway against the forces which are arrayed against it. The demands it makes on the spiritual allegiance and service of its members must be clear and definite, and in the future it may have to draw the line more severely between itself and the world.

There is one aspect of the Church's work which will require to receive something of the prominence it had in an older day, if the cause of religion is not to suffer damage. I refer to the teaching function of the Church. We have heard a good deal lately about the ignorance of the elementary facts of Christianity which chaplains have found among soldiers at the front. The ignorance is not confined to soldiers, as many of us have come to know in the course of ministerial work, and it is often astonishingly great. Young people are growing up in our midst who have the vaguest ideas about Christian history. Now Christianity is a historic religion: it grew out of certain great historic facts, and its meaning cannot be apprehended apart from them. It is true that religion is much more than an apprehension of facts; for the religious man has to discern the meaning and value of the facts, and appreciate their bearing on his own spiritual life. Yet a certain historical knowledge is the first stage to this spiritual appreciation, and is indispensable. If this knowledge be absent a great deal in preaching must fail to elicit a response in the hearer, for it fails to convey a meaning. Of course the Churches have tried to supplement the religious instruction given in the day-school by Sunday-school and Bible-class teaching, and they must continue the work whatever the difficulties in the way. On the

other hand, one must raise the question whether, in face of the existing ignorance, the teaching office of the pulpit ought not to be made more prominent than it is. There are many points about the origin and early environment of Christianity, the growth of Biblical literature, the development of the organisation and doctrine of the Church, which people ought to know, and which many of them do not know. Such knowledge would serve to bring out the greatness of the Christian religion and the transformation which it accomplished. Ignorant belief is a danger, and faith should be able to give a reason for itself. It is a point well worth considering, whether preaching should not from time to time take the form of religious teaching. And in cases where two services are held on the Sunday, the second service might often be made the occasion for giving religious instruction. It would be possible to make this teaching attractive and helpful, if it were done in the right way.

I should like, finally, to put the question, whether the standard of work in the pulpit is being maintained, and whether the average preaching to-day is meeting the needs of the time. We all know, I suppose, critical and dissatisfied people who complain that they can get no good from the sermons they hear. It would not be wise to take all such complaints at their face-value, and one

would require to know whether the critics attend church honestly seeking help. If we make allowance for those who will always be dissatisfied, I think we may conclude that there is no evidence of a general decline in the standard of preaching, though, of course, the quality of the sermons preached is very various, and that alike in matter and delivery. At the same time it is clear that the demands made on the preacher are greater than they were two or three generations ago: people expect more than they used to do, and are more critical of superficial and commonplace preaching. In older days a congregation heard a long, laboured and dull discourse, if not with gladness, at least with resignation. They may not have been edified, but they consoled themselves with the thought that they had been trying to do their duty. The modern generation is less scrupulous in its idea of duty, and the old resignation has vanished. A rambling and incoherent sermon, interspersed with trite observations and conventional platitudes, is heard with hardly concealed impatience, and a preacher of this type soon finds his congregation deserting him. The horror of the dull and tedious is a note of our day.

Nevertheless we must remember that great preaching is not easy, and implies a union of gifts which are not often found together in the

same individual. To compose a good sermon requires time as well as thought and ability, and the requisite time is sometimes not at a man's disposal. The case of the city minister especially deserves consideration and sympathy in this respect. The organisations of his church and his pastoral duties make heavy drafts on his time during the week, and on the Sunday he is frequently called on to preach twice. Under these conditions it is well-nigh impossible for him to be steadily at his best in the pulpit; while, if he takes all the time necessary for preparation, his pastoral work suffers in consequence. It is not desirable that ministers should be placed in such a dilemma; and if some able men come through this ordeal creditably, there are others who do not.

What I have been saying may suggest to your minds the question of ministerial efficiency. It is a difficult question, and I shall merely touch on it. At present the success of a congregation depends too much on one man—the minister. This is the case to some extent in the city, and it is especially so in a country parish, where the minister often has to supervise everything if the work is to be adequately carried on. When, as sometimes happens, a minister for one reason or another is ineffective, the whole cause of religion in the parish suffers. Moreover, a young and inexperienced

man often makes mistakes in dealing with his people, and the results may last for long. Under our present system a man is left very much alone, unless indeed things become very bad: there is no adequate method of guidance or supervision, and this is a grave defect. I feel strongly that, if we are to work our Presbyterian system to better advantage, some effective method of superintendence is necessary. After the Reformation superintendents were introduced, and though the office by and by lapsed, I venture to think there is a real need for the reintroduction of something of the kind. The lack of an adequate system of supervision is a weak point of our Presbyterianism.

The value of good preaching, to return to this topic for a moment, is not in dispute. No one who has the interests of religion at heart will doubt that enhanced power, insight, and persuasiveness in the pulpit would be a great boon in the difficult and trying times in which our lot is cast. Our age is critical, dissatisfied, and restless, and it is impatient of weakness and platitude. Yet it is seeking after light and yearning for a better order of things. Hence it calls for leaders who can lead, for teachers who are men of power and vision. It is, therefore, of paramount importance that there should be a high standard of culture and spiritual earnestness in those who are going forward to the

ministry of the Church. A great deal depends on this. The Scottish ministry in the past has contained a goodly number of such men, but how does it stand with regard to the future? At present, one regrets to say, the prospect is clouded and uncertain. During the last thirty years there has been a gradual and serious diminution of the number of those studying for the Church, and the process, I fear, will be aggravated by the vast social and economic upheaval due to the War. Just now the man who enters the service of the Church can hardly be sure of a living wage, and in many a post he will have poverty for his portion. Now it is perfectly true that the ministry is not a calling for those who desire affluence. The man who wants to be rich should turn elsewhere. At the same time poverty imposes grave disabilities, and a return to apostolic conditions is impossible. Under existing conditions a young man of education and spiritual earnestness, who in normal circumstances would choose the ministry for a profession, may hesitate to do so. He may say to himself: "I am interested in religion and wish to be of service to it, but I prefer to do this in other ways than by actually entering the ministry. For in that case there is a great likelihood that I may have to occupy a position hampered by poverty and by the anxiety and worry that poverty engenders. Under such con-

ditions I could not hope to succeed in my work." And we cannot say that the man is wrong. Nor is it necessary to add how grave the loss to the Church which will ensue if men of culture and earnestness decline to enter the ministry. The danger is already real, it may soon become urgent, and something will have to be done to meet it. For the difficulty is not purely temporary. It is futile to ignore the fact that the vast change in monetary values, due to the War, is not a phenomenon destined speedily to pass away: it will continue for years to come. The problem of the adequate maintenance of the ministry is bound up with the question of Church union: it will involve a reorganisation of the finances of the Church, as well as the suppression of unnecessary charges.

In speaking on the religious outlook I have not hesitated to show the darker sides of the picture, and in these anxious and uncertain days it would be folly to ignore them. But the scene is not one of unrelieved gloom: there are bright places for those who have eyes to see—

> "And not by eastern windows only,
> When daylight comes, comes in the light,
> In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly,
> But westward, look, the land is bright."

Religion is too deep rooted in the fundamental needs of human nature to pass with the passing

fashions of society. If the faith suffers eclipse for a little, it again victoriously reasserts itself, for there is in the religion of Christ the springs of an indestructible life. At present only a very few show any marked hostility to Christianity, and even those who criticise the Churches are seldom without some spring of sympathy for religion. Most men who have experience of life realise that it is impossible to live well without faith of some kind. To-day the preacher who delivers a message based on personal conviction and experience, who has vision and imagination as well as insight to discern the needs of the time and to speak the helpful and illuminating word, will never lack an interested audience. Illustrations are not wanting, and there is something to encourage us here. It is right to note the difficulties which beset us, but it was wise counsel never to 'despair of the republic.' The present is a time of transition; and in religion as in other things we must be prepared for changes, since the spirit of change is abroad in the world. For

> "God fulfils Himself in many ways,
> Lest one good custom should corrupt the world."

If out of our present trials there should emerge the stable outlines of a reorganised church-life, much will have been gained for the cause of religion. The essential thing is that we should

meet the problems which are pressing on us with courage and faith—with faith in God whose good purpose cannot fail, and Who invites us to be fellow-workers with Him for the spiritual harvest.

III

THE INFLUENCE OF KANT ON RELIGIOUS THOUGHT[1]

KANT'S position in the history of thought is in some respects peculiar. He is both the prophet of a new speculative age, and the last and most illustrious representative of the older one. He moves to and fro across the border-line between two worlds, and to regard him as in the main belonging to either of them does injustice to some aspects of his work. If in certain of his salient notions Kant is the herald of the nineteenth century, yet in all his writings we find ideas as well as limitations of view which are characteristic of the century before. While in his treatment of knowledge and morality he transcends the old dogmatism and rationalism, on the other hand, the social and evolutionary aspects of reason and conscience, and the historical development of experience, lie beyond his intellectual horizon. And it is a consequence of this presence of diverse ten-

[1] Originally appeared in the *Hibbert Journal* under the title: "What do Religious Thinkers owe to Kant?"

dencies within it which makes it difficult for any one to accept the Kantian work as it stands. This philosophy can never be an assured resting-place of thought; its inconsistencies are too palpable. But in spite of this, and indeed to some extent because his thought does not form a systematic and consistent whole, Kant has always continued to exercise a living influence on philosophy. As one of his biographers justly remarks, he "left behind him no system, but he threw out suggestions of matchless fertility."[1] Indeed, it is by the suggestiveness with which he handles problems, and by the breadth and sanity of his outlook rather than by the precise results at which he arrives, that Kant is still a centre of light and interest for various schools of thought. At the present day the Absolute Idealist and the Pragmatist, who have no dealings with one another, both quote the philosopher of Königsberg in support of some of their cardinal tenets. And the Agnostic cites the same authority in favour of his contention that knowledge cannot transcend the bounds of experience. The many-sidedness of Kant's thoughts, which are not subjected to the criticism and modification requisite to the development of a harmonious unity, explains the appeal he makes to diverse orders of mind.

What is true of Kant's influence in general is,

[1] Wallace's *Kant*, p. 219.

on the whole, true of his influence on religious thought. Fertility of suggestion is the note of that influence. But, while we associate Kant's speculative influence largely with his *Critique of Pure Reason*, his influence on religious thought has been rather through aspects of his general philosophy than by any direct treatment of religion. I fancy that many who study Kant have never read the treatise on *Religion within the Limits of Mere Reason*, and are satisfied with knowing its contents at second hand. The very title indicates that the author stands remote from the modern psychological and historical treatment of religious experience. And we feel, on closer acquaintance, that its value rather lies in the fact that it is a significant illustration of Kant's principles and methods, than because it offers solutions of religious problems which we could now entirely accept.[1] Yet he does lay stress on one idea which constantly reappears in later discussions of the subject, the idea, namely, that it is possible to distinguish an essential and non-essential element in existing religion. And for Kant this meant

[1] That Kant's treatise on religion did not have any great effect on religious thought is partly due to the fact that it marks the close of an epoch. Hegel and Schleiermacher, who afterwards gave a powerful stimulus to theology, each in his way turned from the abstract to the historic point of view—Hegel to the study of the development of the religious spirit in time, Schleiermacher to reflexion on the living consciousness of the Christian Church.

Christianity. The truth of a dogma depends upon its coincidence with the judgments of the moral self, and the claim to be based on revelation cannot be conceded to any religious doctrine which conflicts with the moral law. For the ordinary ritual of religion Kant had a slender respect. "Everything outside of a good life by which man supposes he can make himself well-pleasing to God is superstition." The religious consciousness is an advance on the moral consciousness simply because it regards all our duties as 'commands of God.'

There is a certain degree of truth in this simple and severe conception of religion. Duty, as the poet tells us, is the

> "Stern daughter of the voice of God."

The moral consciousness has been the reformer of many a decadent faith; and where religion is at discord with morality the spiritual house is divided against itself. Yet the truth in Kant's conception is no doubt partial. For religion must be in harmony with morality, not because it is a kind of appendage to it, but because the higher religious consciousness, while it transcends, also includes the moral consciousness within itself. Religion on the Kantian view becomes, as Dr. Caird has said, a kind of external complement to morality.[1] This

[1] *Phil. of Kant*, vol. ii. p. 564.

appears very clearly in the curious and artificial method by which Kant derives the idea of God. He tells us that the moral consciousness demands that the highest good be realised. But it is necessary to such a good that virtue be combined with happiness. In other words, the satisfaction which flows from the fulfilment of our desires must blend with that fulfilment of our higher nature which is attained through obedience to the moral law. And as there is no necessary connexion between the moral law (which belongs to the intelligible world) and happiness (which belongs to the phenomenal), the coincidence of the two can only be secured by a Being who acts under moral law and is also the ground and cause of nature. God is thus the teleological ground which we postulate to ensure the necessary union of virtue and happiness.[1] Here God is not construed as the ground of the moral law; that stands on its own sure basis. But He is brought in after an external fashion in order to guarantee that the moral good shall likewise be the greatest good, and so combine happiness with itself. This transition to the idea of God is very awkward and artificial. Psychologically, of course, it could not be defended as a description of the process by which men have

[1] Kant sets forth very clearly the teleological function of the idea of God in the preface to the first edition of his *Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft.*

actually reached the idea of God. Kant might reply that he was here dealing with the logic of the moral reason, which does not depend on particular psychological experiences. But the difficulty would remain that the inference carries no conviction of validity to many who understand it. For God, on this theory, has no direct and fundamental relation to the spiritual life in man. Nor is it easy to see why, on Kant's own principles, there is any necessity for making the postulate at all. What convincing reply could he give to one who argued thus? "Moral conduct, I agree, is an essential duty. But the reality and value of my moral duties in no way depend on their being regarded as commands of God. As for happiness, it is a minor matter which pertains to the phenomenal world. An empirical and sensuous product which, on your own showing, does not belong to the real world at all, is a slender and uncertain basis on which to ground the momentous inference that God exists. I therefore decline to make the inference, and maintain that religion is not essential, for it is neither the ground of moral obligation, nor does it affect the inner worth of the man who reverently obeys the moral law." From the Kantian standpoint it would be hard to show that this argument is unsound. That Kant was insincere in postulating God no one will suppose. But the drift of his teaching was to absorb religion

in morality; and we learn without surprise that he personally stood aloof from the ordinary exercises of religion.

Yet Kant's theistic argument, so artificial in its presentation, has in a modified form had a wide vogue. Thus Ritschl and some others argue that it is the limiting and restraining power of the world on the freedom of the self-conscious individual which impels him to seek help through a Reality above the world, *i.e.* God.[1] This movement of the spirit Sabatier terms the *salto mortale* of faith. Here the idea of God has the function of solving the contradiction which the individual experiences between his inner freedom and his external environment. But while this theistic inference is not so artificial as Kant's, it shares the great defect of the latter. For, on either theory, the relation of God to the spiritual life of the individual is only indirect. The idea of God is primarily a *Hilfsvorstellung* towards the attainment of certain empirical ends; therefore, in the degree that these ends are attained, the idea ceases to be necessary. The Kantian and Ritschlian theories both err in making the conception of God depend on particular empirical conditions—the desire for happiness in one case, the longing for deliverance from external constraint in the other. And one cannot think that, as reasons why we

[1] A view also shared by Lipsius.

ought to postulate the idea of God, they are valid. But if we discard the artificial form of Kant's argument and take it along with the Ritschlian statement, we may admit that they have some *psychological* significance: they describe certain features of the religious consciousness. For, without doubt, man's longing for happiness, and his desire to be delivered from the tyranny of his material environment, have been motives which operated in forming and giving content to his conception of a divine Being or Beings. But the working of psychological motives is something very different from an act of the moral reason by which it posits a valid object of faith. Of course, so far as Kant was concerned, the psychology of religion did not come within his ken. Nor did it occur to him to test his religious postulate in the field of psychology. Here, as in other points, Kant was unconsciously governed by the views and methods of the eighteenth century.

Much less, we repeat, by his formal treatise on religion than by these profound and suggestive ideas which appear in his general philosophy has Kant influenced the subsequent course of religious thought. It is the great merit of Kant that, in the course of his speculations, he opens out new lines of thought and puts forth ideas whose vitality is proved by the fact that they are still fresh and fruitful. It is worth while considering

in some detail how this holds in the matter of religion.

1. In the first place, Kant rendered a marked service to religion in his epistemology, which definitely limited the province of science. His main thoughts in this connexion have been widely reproduced by theologians and philosophical defenders of religion. For all who have entered into the Kantian analysis of experience the futility of attempting to explain mind by matter, or of seeking to interpret thought by mechanical principles, is perfectly clear. The synthetic unity of self-consciousness is implied in the existence of an orderly world in space and time which the materialist and realist regard as an independent fact. No part of Kant's criticism is more convincing than where he shows that experience is not intelligible if it be dogmatically construed as impressed on the mind from without—a fallacy from which Berkeley's idealism was not free. The coherency and validity of temporal and spatial experience depend on the constitutive activity of self-consciousness in general. So it involves a *hysteron-proteron* to apply principles, valid in the sphere of external experience, to criticise the Self which these principles already imply. The result of Kant's discussion was to show that the methods of science are not absolute: they are valid in their own sphere, but not beyond it. Thus the materialistic argument against religion is ruled

out of court as having no relevance in this field. Those who have learned the lesson taught by Kant can always give a sufficient answer to those who contend that mind is no more than a function of the brain, and that spiritual experience is the product of physiological processes.

At the same time, Kant's service to religion by his theory of knowledge is not bound up with all the details of that theory. There is a good deal in the Kantian epistemology which few will now accept as it stands. As a theory it is too complicated and artificial; and one can sympathise with a characteristic passage by Dr. Schiller, in which he adjures the "mighty master of both worlds" to say if it were not possible to construct his theory of knowledge more simply.[1] But, when all is said, it remains the enduring merit of Kant to have made clear that it is an inadequate and one-sided view of the world which regards it in isolation from self-consciousness. In other words, the causal-mechanical interpretation of experience is abstract, and so comes short of the truth. For, while it establishes a connexion between phenomena as given, it neither tells us how they come to be given nor the end to which they are moving. The problem of ultimate origins and destinies lies beyond the legitimate domain of natural science. And it is just in this region beyond that the

[1] *Personal Idealism*, pp. 78–79.

religious spirit moves. So recent theologians, both at home and abroad, are wont to urge, quite in the spirit of Kant, the necessary limitations of the scientific point of view, and its inadequacy to the criticism of the religious consciousness. Moreover, there has lately been a significant recognition by certain men of science of the abstract nature of scientific explanation. According to Mach, Poincaré, and others, the so-called laws of nature are descriptive formulæ, justifiable working conceptions rather than explanations. For facts which the scientific man properly rejects as irrelevant to the purpose on hand are, in the long run, not irrelevant. So science, it is conceded, supplies us with good working rules by which we can manipulate nature, not with explanations in the strict sense of the word.

In close connexion with this insistence on the limitations of natural science, many theologians have followed the lead of Kant in emphasising the distinction between the causal and the teleological point of view.[1] Agreeing, for the most part, with Kant that natural science cannot legitimately use the notion of *end* in the explanation of phenomena, they go beyond the letter of the Kantian system in giving the category an immanent or constitutive value in the domain of history. The meaning of history must be read in the light of the goal to which

[1] Ritschl, Lipsius, Sabatier, Rauwenhoff, to name only a few.

it moves, and human progress cannot be understood apart from human destiny. In this connexion the idea of the Kingdom of God, as a teleological conception, has been strenuously urged by modern theologians. The Divine Kingdom is the guiding idea of human development to the realisation of which history is moving. But the very sharpness of the contrast between causality and teleology, nature and history, constitutes a difficulty in the face of the principle of continuity. This problem the theologians who draw their inspiration from Kant do not solve any more than he did; and often they do not seek to deal with it at all.

2. This leads us naturally to the statement of the second line of thought by which Kant has greatly influenced religious thinkers. I refer to his distinction of the practical from the theoretical reason, and the correlative conception of faith as contrasted with knowledge. Knowledge, it is well to remember, is not for Kant the only, nor even the most important, function of the subject. We fail to do justice to his limitation of the province of knowledge and his criticism of the speculative reason, if we do not regard them as stages to the vindication of the rights of practical reason and the reality of freedom. For the aim of Kant's argument is to show that the active moral consciousness cannot fall within the phenomenal world in space and time, nor be subject to its mechanical necessity. The negative and

sceptical aspects of his thought are subordinate, and the reality of the moral will is fundamental. Man, conscious of determining himself to act, is in contact with what is real. But in reflecting on himself through the forms of sense and understanding, he can only know himself as part and parcel of the phenomenal world, and therefore not in the truth of his being. The self, then, which is immediately conscious of itself as free, or self-determining, is not the empirical but the intelligible self, and the noumenal, or intelligible, must be thought as condition of the world of sensible experience. In being conscious of himself as acting freely in accordance with the laws of his inner being, man is likewise conscious that he exercises the pure causality of reason, which causality makes possible the derivative causality manifested in the form of necessary connexion in space and time.

After vindicating the reality and primacy of the moral self as will acting under the idea of freedom, it remained for Kant to ask what claims this intelligible self made on the world, as the outcome of its own constitution. In this way the practical reason will cast light upon the life and the destinies of man. The Postulates of practical reason are the demands which flow from the inner nature of man, and they are the expression of the necessity he is under of connecting the moral consciousness with the view of the world as a whole. Moreover,

we must remember that for Kant this demand, which utters itself in the Postulates, is far more than the expression of emotional desire: it springs, he says, "not from the subjective ground of our wishes, but from an objective motive of the will which binds every rational being." The important point for our purpose at present is to recognise that, according to Kant, the moral will posits for its coherent working the reality of God as the Supreme Good, an idea which, on theoretical grounds, proved indefensible. That is to say, follow out the demands of the moral consciousness and you will find that in the end they imply God. And, in some sense, we must *know* God if the idea is to be of practical value. But Kant insists it is knowledge only in a *practical* relation:

"If we try to extend our knowledge to a theoretical relation, we get the idea of an intelligence which does not think but perceives, and a will which is directed to objects upon the existence of which its own satisfaction does not in the least depend. But these are all attributes of which we can form no conception that enables us to have a *knowledge* of a Supreme Intelligence."[1]

This practical knowledge which is not theoretical Kant terms moral conviction or faith: and in the preface to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* he explains that he had to abolish

[1] *Critique of Prac. Reason*, bk. ii. cap. ii. sec. 7. Professor Watson's translation.

the so-called knowledge of pure reason, in order to give its proper place to faith. The difference between knowledge and faith is defined by the different objects to which they apply: knowledge is of experience in its phenomenal form, while faith apprehends the noumenal or real that lies beyond space and time.

In drawing this distinction, Kant is not to be credited with the intention of setting up a dualism of reason; for in the end he regarded it as the same reason, which in one aspect was theoretical and in another practical. But it is also clear that he held the distinction was necessary and valid, and that we could not translate faith into pure rational or speculative insight. Faith fulfilled an indispensable function in the economy of the moral life; it was the legitimate expression of the self as will. This idea of a higher office of faith in contrast to knowledge has been widely accepted and put to service by religious thinkers. It will be said that the distinction is far older than Kant, and even goes back to the πίστις and γνῶσις of the Alexandrian theologians. The point, however, is that faith is not for Kant simply undeveloped knowledge, but is distinguished from it by the way it originates and the objects to which it is directed. And it is no doubt largely owing to their conviction that post-Kantian Idealism had failed in its splendid effort to merge faith in

knowledge, that theologians returned to Kant and emphasised the distinction he drew. The new movement, however, allowed the intellectual aspect of his theory (which appears in his treatment of the will as reason) to remain in the background, while it set the demands of the feeling and volitional self-consciousness in the foreground.[1] And faith, whose office with Kant was practically limited to the affirmation of the reality of certain ideas, has been treated as the specific instrument of moral and religious knowledge. Hence, it is argued, there are two orders of knowledge, the scientific and the spiritual, which are sharply differentiated. The scientific mind deals with the world of outer experience, exhibiting the connexion of things and establishing the reign of mechanical determination. The religious mind, on the other hand, has its sphere in the free, inner life of the subject, with its desires, needs, and aspirations. The pious heart, we are told, is sure of its object by faith, and is not concerned with scientific proof; for such proof cannot create piety where it does not already exist, and where it does exist the proof would be superfluous, even were it possible. Instead of trying to justify faith on intellectual grounds, we are taught to seek its

[1] No doubt Kant, as Pfleiderer says, failed to recognise the importance of imagination and the emotions as elements in the religious consciousness. *Development of Theology*, p. 18.

warrant in the normal demands of the feeling and acting self.[1]

The historical genesis of this significant theological movement was, as we have already suggested, occasioned by the reaction against Absolute Idealism in Germany, and by distrust of the speculative methods in theology. The demand for reconstruction on more sober lines was in the air, and the philosophy of Kant seemed to offer a suitable basis for a new beginning. So theology fell in with the general movement 'back to Kant,' and developed, in the way we have seen, his distinction between knowledge and faith. Nor can it be denied that, after certain modifications, the Kantian standpoint seemed to offer special advantages to the theologian who wished neither to ignore historical criticism nor to break profoundly with the orthodox creed. Doctrines whose validity thought failed to substantiate might be justified by

[1] This point of view is well represented by A. Sabatier; *vide* his *Philosophie de la Religion*, and especially the section entitled "Théorie critique de la connaissance religieuse." Quite recently M. Loisy has urged the claims of faith as against *historical* knowledge. He apparently holds that Christian beliefs, like that in the Resurrection of Christ, cannot be known to represent historical facts: which means that historical criticism does not warrant our treating them as true. Nevertheless, to the living faith of the corporate Church they are truths, not illusions. If Loisy be right, human nature is strangely divided against itself. His view, though more sincerely urged, reminds one of the contention of the later Schoolmen, that what was true in theology might be false in philosophy.

religious faith. And the same spiritual principle, provided with its own proper sphere, enabled the theologian to close the door of the spiritual edifice against the unwelcome intrusion of the metaphysician. All that was necessary was to correct Kant's abstract treatment, and to bring his principle into vital relation with historical experience. So the Christian consciousness was represented as putting forward its own postulates and affirming them by faith.

This neo-Kantianism in theology is now represented in France and Great Britain as well as in Germany. Among ourselves Hegelianism had a kind of Indian summer a generation after its light had faded in the land of its birth. But now the reaction has set in, and in theology as well as philosophy newer methods are being followed. Nor is this to be regretted, for the later theology emphasises aspects of religious experience which had been too much neglected. Reflective people had grown weary of the 'rational proofs' of the older theology. The familiar parade of reasons in the form of 'evidences' had turned out curiously impotent to create belief in those who had not the 'will to believe.' Wherefore it was natural that many should be attracted by the idea that the better justification of religion is to be found in the contents of the religious consciousness itself. And even those who are doubtful about the rôle of faith

in the new theology can still see in the spiritual consciousness which it seeks to construe a fruitful subject for reverent psychological study.

3. In a development of his philosophy which closely connects itself with the foregoing subject, Kant must likewise be credited with greatly influencing religious thought. I refer to his insistence on the reality and importance of the world of moral values. The distinction so frequently drawn now between fact and value may be traced back to Kant. For it is really the distinction between knowledge and faith in another aspect. No doubt Kant does not ordinarily use the word *value* in this reference; but when he speaks of ethical *ends* he practically means the same thing.[1] For the end denotes a value to be realised—a value that stands in contrast to what is, and which is valuable because it embodies what somehow satisfies the acting subject or practical reason. The personal reference is essential; and so one can understand how Kant was led to deny the immanent use of the category of end in nature, and to restrict it to the moral world.

The significance of the idea of value in the Kantian system is apt to be obscured by the way in which it is reached. Here, as elsewhere, Kant neglects psychology, and treats the formal principle of ethics in abstraction from its material or content.

[1] *Vide* Höffding, *Religionsphilosophie*, p. 349.

From the pure idea of the moral law, the universal imperative of duty, he seeks to deduce the conception of moral agents who are ends in themselves, and who form in their relations to one another a kingdom of ends or moral values. The psychological development has certainly not been in this way, but from value to its projection as end, and from ends to their unification under the conception of a moral law. Kant regarded the moral imperative as a practical, synthetic *a priori* principle; and it might be urged that, if psychologically later (ὕστερον γενέσει), it is logically prior to the notion of end (πρότερον φύσει). But in that case the law should be shown to be immanent in the growth of moral experience; and this Kant could not do, for with him the law is a pure form, which we may typify but cannot realise in the natural or sensuous world. It is due to Kant's formal and unhistoric method that he fails to realise the genetic function of value in relation to moral law. But there can be no question of the stress he lays on the reality and importance of the realm of moral values. These are not of sensuous origin. They spring from the intelligible nature of man: they proceed from a causality which is free, for it acts in accordance with a law which is the expression of the truest character of the agent.

Though he himself does not say it in so many words, we can see that Kant uses the idea of value

to express the nature of God. The pure reason yields the regulative idea of an unconditioned Being who is the ground of all conditioned realities. The practical reason, again, postulates God as the Cause who consummates the union of the rational and empirical character — who brings about the combination of virtue with happiness. But "the postulate of the highest derived good is at the same time the postulate of the highest original good." That is to say, practical reason postulates God as a Supreme Value in virtue of the fact that He brings about the *Summum Bonum.* And, though Kant does not seem to have remarked it, the idea of God as an ethical postulate does not strictly coincide with the unconditioned Being yielded by the pure reason. In the one case we have the conception of a supreme Reality, and in the other of a supreme Value. Implicitly, at all events, Kant here made the fertile suggestion that the moral consciousness could give a valid content to the idea of God, which the speculative intellect could not supply. With the great idealistic thinkers, on the other hand, the notions of reality and value coincide. Plato's Idea of the Good is at once the absolute Reality and the absolute Value which is the measure of all other values. Hegel, who insists on the thorough continuity of the theoretical and practical reason as exhibited by the dialectic, puts forward the same claim for the

Absolute Idea. Kant, in making what amounted to a refusal to fuse into one the problems of existence and of value, opened out a line of thought which has been widely followed in a later day. Among earlier thinkers, Herbart, whose treatment of the problem of existence had yielded an irreducible surd or real, sharply distinguished from it the problem of appreciation. Afterwards Lotze, developing the idea of the value-judgment as the expression of the spiritual and emotional self-consciousness, gave a new clearness to the religious significance of the principle. For he urged that the idea of God as the ultimate Reality must not only meet the claims of reason, but also satisfy the demands of the spiritual nature.[1] Aided by the work done by Kant and Lotze, Ritschl and others then took up the principle of the value-judgment and applied it with great energy and suggestiveness in the domain of theology. In his hands it became an instrument which enabled the theologian to dispense with metaphysics, and to build up a system of Christian doctrine which claims to be the reflection of the practical demands of the Christian consciousness. Ritschl would interpret the idea of God through value-judgments only, in the end going beyond Kant to deny reason even a regulative function in this reference. Ritschl's

[1] It may be doubted if Lotze's speculative construction of the idea of God coheres with the ethical content he would read into it.

view of the theological function of the value-judgment has won a wide acceptance. And religious thinkers like Pfleiderer and Siebeck, who are far from sharing the Ritschlian antagonism to speculative philosophy, fully recognise that the value-judgment has an indispensable office in giving content to the conception of God.

It would fall beyond the scope of this paper, even were the writer competent, to enter into recent psychological theories of the nature of value, and their applications in the field of economics and ethics. Nor can we do more than refer to the important distinction between intrinsic and instrumental values. Indeed, the principle seems in a way towards becoming part of the cultivated thought of the time, and we may note how writers of different schools, who have dealt with religious problems, agree in giving a place of more or less importance to the value-judgment. Thus, Professor Royce, in his lectures on *The World and the Individual*, admits the need of a provisional distinction between the world of description and the world of appreciation; though, of course, as his theory of reality is a form of monistic idealism, he denies that there is a dualism between them. Some time ago Professor James gave us a remarkable study of religious psychology in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*. In this volume the author was not primarily concerned with the validity of

religious experience, but we can gather how he regards the question. The standard he would apply is one of value rather than rationality. The explanations of religious phenomena are of the nature of hypotheses, not conclusive inferences. We can only determine the rank of a religion, or a phase of spiritual experience, by its practical value, by the way the thing works and the effects it produces. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Professor James's pragmatist treatment of the varieties of religious experience is a striking illustration of a tendency, on the side of philosophy and not of theology, to translate the problem of rationality in religion into one of valuation. Another application of the value-judgment to religion has been recently put forward by the well-known Danish thinker Höffding. While he inclines to a speculative result termed 'critical monism,' he asserts that we cannot show *how* the principle of continuity holds between fact and value. He agrees that it is the nature of the religious consciousness to express itself in value-judgments. His distinctive point of view is, that he regards the essence of religion to be "faith in the persistence of value" in the world-process. Religion, that is to say, centres in the inner conviction that throughout the development of experience in time the good maintains itself. It is an illegitimate use of the principle of analogy to personify the ground of

this good as a Person. To use the phrase of James, this is an 'overbelief,' which Höffding thinks critical reflection cannot justify. Mythology and theology are stages in the progress of the religious consciousness which reflective thought must dissolve into symbolism of the Reality we cannot define.

A point common to many writers, who have laid stress on the function of the value-judgment in religion, is their agreement with Kant, that speculative thought cannot justify the idea of God which faith demands. Such assurance as we can have comes through the practical reason. But those who agree with Kant in this conclusion are by no means at one about the theological inferences which may be evolved from the value-judgments of religious experience. While churchly-minded thinkers offer us a renovated theology which is said to reflect the normal Christian consciousness, those whose attitude is more negative and critical treat the religious valuations of the subject rather as matters for psychological study than as carrying with them any secure reference to objective reality. The somewhat discordant results which are reached by this method are, in part at least, due to the method itself; and this defect arises from the rigid separation of the theoretical from the practical reason in dealing with religion—a separation which had its historic origin in the work of Kant. Therefore those who have found deliverance,

through the value-judgment, from the perils of speculation must recognise that they have only exchanged one danger for another. For if you exclude reason from religion, the hazard is great that theology will in the end be reduced to a phenomenology of the religious consciousness, and the 'things in heaven' to empty 'objects of desire.' In dealing with religion, reason and faith, the theoretical and the practical consciousness, must supplement one another. And though we cannot establish the continuity of fact and value, we are entitled to hold that the distinction does not rest on a dualistic difference. For both judgments are functions of the same self-conscious personality, which cannot finally be divided against itself. It is the whole self and not a part which manifests itself in the religious consciousness; and in the working of the value-judgment thought itself is active.

4. I go on now to note a final aspect in which Kant has greatly affected religious thought. Yet here again the matter is not new, but a special side of what we have already been discussing. Ideas of value have a personal centre and ground; and I refer to the high importance Kant assigned to personality, and more definitely to the moral personality. Even in his theory of knowledge the significance of the self is paramount. In the Kantian epistemology the dross is mingled with the gold, but an all-important truth is duly brought

out—the truth that the world of experience is not impressed on the mind from without, but is built up by the synthetic activity of the self-conscious subject. In the moral sphere there is a corresponding insistence on the spontaneity of the self. The law, with the realm of ends or values connected with it, is the expression of the legislative ego. The good does not come to us as a fact from without, but depends on the law, which in turn rests on the freedom of the moral self. For Kant, the supreme principle of morality is the autonomy of the will. Freedom, he expressly declares, is the keystone of the whole system of pure and practical reason. In the consciousness that he is not mechanically determined but determines himself, man has the assurance that he exercises a casuality of reason, and is a member of an intelligible world. No doubt the stress Kant lays on the negative aspect of freedom helps to make his conception abstract and individualistic. For he tends to regard it as an elevation above the sway of casuality in time, and he never overcomes the separation he made between the intelligible and the empirical world. Yet of the reality of freedom Kant felt sure; it was bound up with the moral consciousness of man.[1] "Autonomy," he declares, "is the

[1] *How* freedom is possible Kant says we cannot show, but we can defend the idea against objections. *Metap. of Morality*, section on "The Limits of Practical Philosophy."

foundation of the moral value of man and every rational being." Man who exercises the casuality of reason, and has the power of moral initiative, is a being of high worth. Persons are 'objective ends,' for which no other end can be substituted. Hence the form of the categorical imperative, which bids us treat humanity in our own person, or in that of another, always as an *end*, never as a mere *means*. All through the ethical writings of Kant there runs a feeling of intense reverence for the worth of human personality. If man trembles as he recognises his shortcomings, it is not before an alien authority, but before the moral law, which is the voice of his inmost self. Living amid a world of phenomena which eludes the endeavour of reason to find its comprehensive explanation, man in the inner consciousness of his freedom is essentially real. Indeed, it would be true to say that Kant lays such stress on the freedom and independence of the moral agent, that he precludes himself from bringing morality into a vital relation with religion, where the consciousness of dependence is fundamental.

Nevertheless Kant's insistence on the value of personality has had a large and altogether salutary influence on philosophic and religious thought. As against all forms of pantheism and mysticism which tend to weaken the sense of personality, he calls attention to fundamental moral facts—facts

which, if they are to be explained, ought not to be explained away in the process. No doubt the lack of consistency between the various elements which form the structure of the Kantian philosophy prompted the endeavour to solve these differences through a monistic principle of unity. But we are true to the spirit of Kant when we contend that the moral personality of man must not be emptied of value as a consequence. During the last century the two most important attempts at a comprehensive theory of existence were the movements we may broadly term Scientific Evolution and Absolute Idealism. Judged by the foregoing test, both are found wanting. The former, indeed, has never succeeded, the effort of Mr. Spencer notwithstanding, in turning the edge of the Kantian criticism which shows that the self is not the product of an independent real world. And, in the endeavour to elicit the *ought* from the *is*, it conspicuously fails. Religious thinkers, who have learned the lesson taught by Kant, have successfully defended the rights of the spiritual self against the assaults of scientific materialism. And, as against the naturalistic tendency to evolve the concept of moral value out of lower elements, the moral teaching of Kant has proved a sound tonic. The position of Absolute Idealism is different. From one point of view it is the outcome of a genuine effort to give coherence and completeness

to Kant's work. But, whatever other objections may be raised against this philosophy, perhaps the most serious one is that it gives neither a satisfying meaning nor value to the personality of man. For the individual, instead of being something to himself, has his reality and worth only in a Universal Consciousness, whose partial and transitory reflection he is. Strictly interpreted, the truth of the individual must be the form of self-consciousness in general; and the apparent differentiation of individuals can only be due to the spatial and temporal medium in which the Absolute realises itself. The logical conclusion is candidly drawn by Mr. Bradley, when he reduces all mundane persons and values to appearances which are somehow absorbed and transmuted in the ineffable Absolute.

That this form of idealism has frequently been presented in a very interesting and fascinating form is true, and it is also true that genuinely religious men have believed that the facts of the religious consciousness could be adequately construed under this speculative system. A closer and more critical examination of the phrases used by Absolute Idealists, in order to determine their real meaning, has, we venture to think, tended to dispel the belief. And there is ample evidence at present that many feel the need of a revised idealism which will relate itself more intimately to the facts of finite experience. In this connexion the

growth of the movement termed *ethical* or *personal* idealism is significant. It is a token that thinkers are no longer straining with the old ardour to scale the high peaks of speculation, from whence they can see and appreciate all the kingdoms of the world, but are coming back to follow the safer path of which Kant was the pioneer in an earlier day. The practical and spiritual aspects of the conscious self are being set in the light; and if unification is still held to be the goal of thought, it is recognised that no unification can be valid which does damage to the realm of personal values. For the moral self-consciousness demands to be real. Here the influence of Kant is, to borrow an image from Plato, like a breeze from wholesome places bringing health. Of nothing was Kant more sure than of the fundamental fact of moral freedom, which carried with it the truth of the moral law and the imperative of duty. And these are values which bespeak the inner value of that personal life which connects and gives living utterance to all forms of worth. An idealism which seeks above all to be true to the moral and spiritual self does homage, in fact if not in word, to the memory of Kant.

IV

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE AND THEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT[1]

THE great inheritance which the intellectual life of this century derives from the last century is the idea of development. It is a commonplace to say that this conception has revolutionised our way of regarding nature, life, and human society. And no one to-day would approach the study of a type of plant or animal, or a particular human institution, without considering it from the evolutionary standpoint. As Aristotle remarked long ago, the best way to philosophise about the nature of a thing is to study its process of growth. The genetic method has been successfully applied to the study of religions, and the progress of the religious consciousness has been traced from its lowly beginnings in animism and spiritism to its culmination in ethical and spiritual religion. One of the results of this investigation has been to show how essentially a process of

[1] The first part of this paper appeared in the *American Journal of Theology*.

development is a feature of a living religion. When a religion becomes stereotyped and mechanised the vital spirit ebbs from it, even though it may linger long as an external institution. So perished the ancient faiths of Greece and Rome, and so must perish any religion which is divorced from the spiritual life and culture of the age. For life means growth and fruitful interaction with the environment; and the living thing has the capacity to select and appropriate elements which nourish its inner being and promote its development.

To those who have entered into this way of thinking the position of theology at the present day gives much ground for reflection. While the other sciences are undergoing a rapid development, it has remained stationary, if not absolutely, yet to a very great extent. Most, if not all, of the Churches are burdened with a theology which grew up and assumed form in what may be termed a pre-scientific age, and the right to modify and reconstruct is by no means universally recognised. And unless this right is fully conceded, the position of an enlightened teacher of the subject must, to say the least, be an awkward and difficult one. The *fons et origo mali* lay in the notion generally accepted in the creed-building ages, and not yet entirely extinct, that it was possible to elaborate a systematic body of religious doctrine which would be the norm of spiritual experience and belief for all

time. And conservative sentiment, which interfuses itself with all religious things, acts as a protecting bulwark against the spirit of innovation. To those under the dominion of this feeling it savours of sacrilege to alter and amend the 'faith once delivered to the saints.'

But the herald signs of change are becoming visible above the horizon. The pressure of modern knowledge is making itself felt even in quarters which have long been inhospitable to new ideas. One of the most interesting and significant features of the religious outlook is the rise of the vigorous Modernist party within the Church of Rome. The Romish Church indeed has all along had a theory of development, but it was a theory incompatible with the true idea of organic growth. For its developmental principle was that of accretion, not of transmutation, and the Church accepted the idea of an unalterable deposit of faith. Elements which were 'preformed' there might be further defined, explicated, and elaborated: but real reconstruction was excluded, and what had been taken up into the structure of the Catholic creed could never be discarded. Under such limitations a true reconciliation with modern knowledge was not possible. As Father Tyrrell has said: "A bold contention that all ecclesiastical development is simply a mechanical unpacking of what was given in a tight parcel 2000 years ago!" To this

he opposes Modernism as "an expression of an opposite contention, of a belief in time, in growth, in vital and creative evolution." And one cannot doubt that progress is bound up with the frank and full acknowledgment of this principle.

Although a more liberal spirit has prevailed in the Protestant Church, yet the theologians of Protestantism tacitly took over from the pre-Reformation Church the idea that it was possible to have a creed universally and always valid. But they believed that creed must be founded on Scripture, as the Word of God, and not on the tradition and authority of the Church. And apparently they assumed there could be no other interpretation of Scripture admissible than their own. Hence they made no provision for development, and changed and enlarged views of the Bible have made the uncritical method in which they elaborated their doctrines unsatisfactory. So the idea of development in theology is just as much a pressing problem for the intelligent Protestant as for the enlightened Catholic.

It will be of advantage to make some observations at this point on the way in which this problem of development has been dealt with by two schools of thought in Germany during the last century. The former drew its inspiration in the main from Hegel, and tended to merge theology in a philosophy of religion. The theory was that theology

expounded religious truth in the form of representation or figurative thinking, while the speculative thinker had for his task to purify and elevate this matter and bring it into the form of the philosophic notion. This was the method followed by the Swiss theologian Biedermann, and it was adopted, perhaps in a less whole-hearted way, and with less radical results, by Pfleiderer and Lipsius. So far as this method stands for the right to exercise critical reflexion on the dogmas of the Church, and for an attempt to bring about greater coherency between the elements of doctrine, the justice of its claim need not be disputed. The objection to it was that in some hands it degenerated into an arbitrary application to historic materials of an assumed higher point of view, instead of being a sympathetic criticism and reconstruction from within. It was no doubt his sympathy with the reaction provoked by the extremes of the speculative method which prompted Ritschl to take up and seriously work out the thought of Schleiermacher, that theology must be the living outcome and expression of Christian experience. In other words, it should endeavour to give a general and coherent exposition of the principles involved in the Christian consciousness. Hence the Ritschlian attempt to show that doctrines were values, and to build up a theology on judgments of value. The natural affinity of this

method with the pragmatic method, about which we hear so much at present, hardly needs to be pointed out. Though one may disagree with a good deal in the Ritschlian work, it is only fair to say that it was a genuine effort to liberate theology from a dead weight of dogma, and to bring it into a living relation with religious experience. Hence, whatever its shortcomings, Ritschlianism did much to vitalise the study of theology in Germany and in this country.

But certain assumptions are made by writers of this school which deserve to be examined. It is assumed by Harnack, Bousset, and others that, by a study of the records of Christianity, and by following the working of the Christian spirit in history, it is possible to distinguish essential from non-essential elements and to reconstruct a primitive Christian consciousness which is normative. Yet in the selection and valuation of historic materials, in order to make clear what is essential, the critic must bring with him some guiding conceptions, some ideal of what religion ought to be. He cannot pretend that what is called 'the essence of Christianity' is explicitly set forth in the Biblical literature and distinguished from the non-essential. The historian must bring something of his own with him in forming his judgment, and his own spiritual valuations help to form the ideal by which he judges. For this reason he cannot form

an absolutely disinterested appreciation of the life of the past; he always sees the past through the spiritual environment in which he is placed. And to reconstruct in all its fulness the religious experience of a distant time when the *Weltanschauung*, to use a convenient phrase, was very different from his own—to reconstruct such an experience with perfect accuracy is beyond his power. It does not follow that what the present-day historian finds to be the essence of Christianity would have expressed the mind of primitive Christians themselves. Ritschlian critics eliminate the eschatological element from the essence of the gospel; but it is hardly to be thought that this was a subordinate matter to the early Church. And then, along with this assumed ability to separate clearly essential from non-essential elements, there goes the further assumption that the essential the critics have reached is the proper norm by which to test the historic evolution of the Christian consciousness. With 'the true nature of Christianity' to guide them, writers like Harnack and the late Edwin Hatch regard the elaborate theology of the ecclesiastical creeds as in the main a *damnosa hæreditas*. It is a false accretion due to the irruption of the Greek speculative spirit which overlaid and distorted the genuine Christian consciousness. The beginnings of this process of distortion are discernible, according to Bousset, even in the Pauline theology.

Now I am not concerned to maintain that there is not an element of truth in these contentions, nor to deny that arbitrary and accidental materials have intruded themselves into the faith. None the less the view before us suggests a very pessimistic reading of the evolution of theology. Almost from the first theology began to misconceive and pervert, and only after 1900 years are we beginning to clear away these false additions and to get back to the substratum of truth! The form and the content of religious experience cannot be separated and opposed to one another in so drastic a fashion. Doctrinal constructions which were quite alien to it could not have been forced on the Christian consciousness, and it would hardly have accepted patiently a yoke felt to be oppressive. In fact some measure of elective affinity must have existed, and no doubt there was a process of interaction between the form and the content. One cannot suppose, for example, that the theological construction of Christ as the divine Logos was regarded by the consciousness of the early Church as a metaphysical subtlety or a superfluous speculation. It was the formal statement of the value-experience Christ had for the souls of His followers. Of course to say this is very far from saying that the doctrinal statement of the Church's faith by the theologians of the fourth and fifth centuries of our era is to be taken as an absolute and final statement. Spiritual

experience is not a stereotyped magnitude but a living and growing thing, and for this reason the doctrines which seek to generalise and define it will require to be modified and reconstructed from time to time; the new wine must be put into new bottles. But this is quite consistent with our holding that the body of doctrine developed at a particular stage was at least a relatively suitable expression of the existing religious consciousness. The ancient creeds of the Church are felt by our age to be unsatisfactory, not because they were mistaken and perverted constructions from the first, but because the growing spiritual consciousness has moved beyond them and has ceased to find a full satisfaction in them.

It may be of use, in view of the practical importance of the question, to explain more fully the relation, as we conceive it, of religious doctrine to religious experience. That doctrine (and the formulation of doctrines in a theological system) is a kind of excrescence on the religious life is not a tenable theory. It is not an arbitrary or an accidental product, but has its place and function in the logic of religious development. Every vital religion that reaches a certain stage of growth will expand into doctrines, just as the tree arrives at a point when it puts out branches. In the technical sense doctrine is a comparatively late product of religious development, but it is prepared for in the early stages of religious growth. Theology is always the outcome of

reflective thought; yet even in the primitive period man had his instinctive beliefs by which he gave meaning to his religious experiences. Without this rudimentary qualification of feeling by thought no experience could be called religious, and prior to the use of language as the medium of ideas, religion in the proper sense could not exist. The rise of myths and cosmogonies betokens the further development of this aspect of the religious consciousness; but religion has to pass from the tribal to the national form, from the level of unconscious to conscious development, ere the structure of religious doctrine begins to grow. It is then that, in obedience to the deep-rooted impulse of man's nature to ask for reasons, theology commences its work of thinking out and expounding the meaning of what is done in religion. The cult and its ritual are the oldest part of a developed faith, and they go back, in their rudiments at least, to a primitive period. And the early theologian sets to work to explain the significance of the acts performed in the ritual, and to explicate in doctrines what is done in worship. Around the relatively stable material of the cult doctrines proceed to gather; and afterward, of course, the task of the theologian assumes a wider scope and meaning when theology comes into contact and interaction with independent aspects of culture like science and philosophy. Inasmuch as religious experience is concentrated around the cultus, the-

ology may be said from its commencement to be an endeavour to set forth the meaning of religious experience. There is something legitimate and even necessary in this, for man is not only a being who feels and wills; he also desires to know and understand. And if the thinking-function evolves later in the order of time, it is not on that account inferior in the order of value. So theology comes in to answer the demand made by a growing self-consciousness, the demand, namely, that religious experience be generalised and thus become a significant content. Only by means of religious ideas embodied in doctrines can a religion be taught and spread. Only because religion is a thinking of experience as well as a feeling-state can it function as an aspect of the growing life of culture.

Accordingly I am forced to dissent from some things which the late Professor James has said, in his vivid and picturesque way, about religious doctrine in his *Varieties of Religious Experience.* Admitting the value of what James, followed by Pratt, Delacroix, and others, has to tell us of the function of the subconsciousness in giving a psychological explanation of mysticism and other religious phenomena, it is still, I think, a mistake to treat the feeling-life as the one and essential foundation of religion, while theology is a secondary and not very important superstructure. It is perfectly true that there is more in spiritual experi-

ence than can be expressed in doctrine, and we all know that there are depths in the inner life which defy verbal expression. But this does not prove that doctrine is not an essential aspect of any developed religion. And in truth we have only to remember the interaction, already noted, between form and content to see that religious ideas in their turn promote the development of spiritual feeling. For ideas can become the centres and rallying points of emotion, and the more stable sentiments can also gather round them. With much that Professor James says about the practical valuelessness of scholastic theology and the metaphysics of the divine attributes one may agree. But the fact is that we are here dealing with a theology which the spiritual life of the age has outgrown, or is fast outgrowing, and the argument is not relevant against theology in the exercise of its legitimate function of interpreting religious experience.

In offering some further observations on the subject I would urge that a candid acceptance of the principle of development in theology is indispensable, for spiritual experience itself develops. It is sometimes argued that in a religion you have a determinate principle, revealed in a typical experience, which maintains itself unchanged throughout. As I have contended elsewhere, this is to forget that a religion has its being in the consciousness of living minds, and as such it is subject

to interaction with the other contents of that consciousness. The scientific knowledge of the age, its ethical ideas, and its practical aspirations are all reflected in individual minds, and the religious spirit cannot remain unaffected by them. To suppose that a specific and typical form of religious experience can maintain an abstract identity with itself from age to age, a changeless aspect of a changing mind, is to assert what has no psychological probability. Experience as life begets subtle alterations of outlook and valuation while the historic process is running its course; and, as Eucken has suggestively remarked, it is never the past as it once was that we re-create, but the past as it is interpreted through the spiritual life of the present. However anxious we might be to do so, we are unable to pass beyond our spiritual environment and reproduce in ourselves the very form and pressure of the spiritual experience of Christians in the first century. In an article in the *Hibbert Journal* (April 1908, p. 491) Dr. Forsyth confidently puts the question: "If we may not rest on the mere dictum of an apostle, may we not rest upon our own repetition of the apostolic experiences, the experience which made the apostles?" Now if this only means that the history of Christianity reveals a continuous spiritual experience which connects itself with the person and work of Christ, few unprejudiced minds

will be found to dispute the statement. But if, as seems more likely, the words are meant to convey the idea that an experience of Christ, say that of St. Paul, repeats itself in identical form from age to age, then there are difficulties in such a theory. For individual experience must always be psychologically and socially conditioned, and no exact repetition of past experience seems possible. If a single and specific type of experience, reproducing itself from generation to generation, lay behind the development of Christianity, it is hard to see why there should be those great changes in spiritual and ethical ideals which the history of the Church discloses. At the very least one must suppose that the experience was obscured, distorted, and modified by other influences which militated against its full and clear expression. And this is practically to admit that the typical experience is qualified in its working by interaction with other elements.

It may be said that the line of argument we have been developing appears to sacrifice any principle of identity in religious experience, and that it would follow that the Christian consciousness to-day is only the same in name with that of the first Christians. In reply it may be said that there is an identity, but it is not that of a hard and fast type but of a living process of growth which is continuous throughout. For the gift of

Christ was a spiritual life, a seed of promise sown in the hearts of men and by fruitful interaction taking fresh form and expression from age to age. It is not the weakness, it is the strength of the Christian spirit at once to enrich and to be enriched by other elements in the expanding life of man. And it maintains through all its movement the unity of spirit and purpose which preserves its continuity.

Now this developmental character of spiritual life requires a corresponding development on the side of its theological expression. But this truth is often obscured by the fact that men are not fully aware how essentially growing is religious experience, and they do not realise the movement in which they are involved because change is gradual and proceeds without observation. Though we may not fully recognise it, our religious consciousness is none the less affected by the knowledge and ethical culture of the age, and receives colour and meaning from them. Hence the impossibility of simply going back to the past and trying to reproduce its spirit and outlook. The spiritual life of the present, for example, would forbid the primitive Christian eschatology, and even Calvinistic predestinarianism cannot now enter into the vital substance of the faith.

But with the full acceptance of the principle that spiritual experience is not a stereotyped form but

a developing process, development in its doctrinal expression becomes a necessity. And the theological distress and unrest of our time are, in part at least, due to the fact that conservative sentiment and institutional interests strive to maintain the validity of theological forms which have become too narrow for the content of the spiritual life. It may be granted that the work of reconstruction will bring with it many serious problems and perplexities, and the old method of elaborating dogmas out of texts of Scripture, read uncritically, is no longer available. In some departments of his task the theologian will have to cultivate closer relations with the philosopher whose office is 'to think things together.' In other matters the need of greater simplicity and reserve will be apparent. Yet, whatever the difficulties, the duty of theological development cannot be postponed indefinitely; it ought rather to be courageously faced in the interests of vital and practical religion.

The foregoing paper was written ten years ago, and in its main contentions still represents the writer's convictions. But the intervening years have seen great and epoch-making changes, and these have reacted on men's minds and produced new ideas and valuations. Consequently the religious outlook wears an altered aspect; and

the situation has grown more urgent, and in some ways more difficult. The tremendous shock which Western civilisation has experienced as the result of the Great War has exercised a profoundly unsettling influence on men's minds, and this unsettlement is reflected in the political and economic, in the social and religious life. Radical ideas on all subjects are in the air, the old order receives scant respect, and what is to issue from this ferment not even the wisest can forecast. That the spirit of change which is abroad is affecting, and will continue to affect, religious beliefs and practice, no one can doubt; but the definite lines on which change will proceed we cannot clearly predict. The fresh thoughts that are struggling for expression may work like the wholesome leaven, purifying while conserving the religious heritage of the past. On the other hand, if not guided and controlled, they may bring about some kind of break with the existing forms of religion.

No one conversant with the signs of the times will pretend that theology, especially ecclesiastical theology, is regarded with favour or interest either in educated or uneducated circles. Many, even among those who profess religion, are avowedly indifferent to the traditional creeds; and some even speak foolishly, as if doctrines were a kind of excrescence with which religion could well dispense. But if we discount the language of

extremists, the fact will not be gainsaid that the present unrest and perplexity have intensified the dissatisfaction with the theology of the Confessions; and this is apparent in all the Churches. The claim to the right of doctrinal change and development is being frankly and strenuously urged, and we are told that the future of the Churches will be jeopardised by a rigid adherence to the Symbols of the past. Yet one cannot ignore the truth that construction is harder than criticism, though criticism is always popular. As Hooker said: "He that goeth about to persuade a multitude that they are not so well governed as they ought to be, shall never want attentive and favourable hearers." Purely negative criticism, however, is seldom very profitable: to be really helpful criticism must be illuminated and guided by constructive ideas. In the absence of such ideas discussion may produce change, but there is not likely to be a real and fruitful development. It is just the lack of clearness and general agreement on these guiding ideas which makes the religious future obscure and uncertain. Yet the present religious prospect, though the issues be dubious, is not without its brighter aspects. For one thing there is a decided trend of opinion in the direction of recognising a distinction between what is fundamental and what is secondary in Christian faith. Among reflecting people there is a firm belief that

there are doctrines in the creeds about which there can be reasonable certitude, while there are others which have no relevancy to the spiritual needs of men and women. And the conviction is sound, that the Church should neither officially profess such doctrines nor require acceptance of them. On the other hand, I must admit that it would be far from easy at present to secure agreement on the definition of the fundamental elements of the Christian faith; and any practical attempt at definition would reveal the difficulty. In the circumstances there is a tendency to follow the line of least resistance, and to evade a controversy which might be profitless. This means that you endorse the proposition that there are fundamental Christian truths, but allow the individual to form his own conclusion in regard to what is fundamental. A permanent solution of the problem this is not. But the policy is at least in harmony with the principle of individual liberty, and it is in accordance with the fact that creeds which are binding in every detail are not practicable.

That out of the perplexity and unrest of these anxious days a fresh movement of spiritual progress should ensue will be the hope of all who believe that man's truest well-being demands that the fire be kept burning on the religious altar. There can be no healing for a world in pain, if men fall back on the hard gospel of materialism and strive to

live by bread alone. And anything which makes religion a more real and vital thing will be a gain for man and society. If doctrinal modifications help in this direction they will be justified; but if these modifications are to do justice to the religious experience, there are, I venture to think, two conditions which must be fulfilled. These might be briefly expressed under the heads of (*a*) continuity, and (*b*) simplification.

(*a*) There can be no true development if the principle of continuity is sacrificed. The past must be taken up into the life of the present if there is to be progress. A society or an institution may prosper through reform but not through disruption, just as you may promote the vigour of a tree by pruning it, but not by tearing it up by the roots. Still the question will be asked: What exactly is meant by continuity? Does religious continuity mean merely a sameness of life, a general similarity of moral purpose? Certainly it means this, but does it not mean more? Suppose the Church gradually discarded any belief in a personal God and a supramundane realm, and proclaimed a purely humanitarian gospel for this world, would this suffice to preserve its continuity? Most people, I think, would answer in the negative; for they would judge that the new religion, whatever points of contact it might have with the old, was no longer typically Christian in its character. On

the other hand, the secret of continuity is not to be found in some unchanging 'deposit of the faith' which maintains itself intact from age to age. For no body of doctrine maintains itself strictly intact throughout the course of religious development: at the very least it is subject to changes of interpretation and emphasis. Again, if we say that the continuity is one of Christian experience, then there must be something characteristic in that experience; and this points to some principle underlying the experience and finding expression in it. It would be futile, it seems to me, to look for the principle in some speculative idea, for this in its nature is too abstract to fulfil the function demanded of it. The solution surely lies in recognising that Christianity is, what it claims to be, a historic faith, and grew out of the life and work of Christ. The changing beliefs, values, and ideals which mark the developing Christian consciousness, have all a continuous and vital connexion with the historic revelation of God in Christ: out of this they came and upon it they depend. What therefore is continuous, and thus characteristic, in the Christian experience is the reference to Christ, and this each age strives to express in terms of its own spiritual life and values. The Christian consciousness, though from time to time it reinterprets this principle, cannot discard it without ceasing to be Christian.

(*b*) If continuity in the sense explained be secured, on what terms and within what limits will theological development at present be possible? As already indicated, I conceive the process, in the first instance, must be one of simplification rather than of further elaboration. The main function of theology is to interpret and state in doctrinal form the beliefs and values which are immanent in the religious experience itself. And in proportion as the theologian is faithful in his interpretation of the religious experience can his work claim such authority as belongs to that experience. One recalls the old legend of Antæus, who soared aloft on wings, but whose powers of flight failed and were only revived when he touched again the stable earth. So the theologian wins fresh strength and assurance for his high tasks by returning to, and establishing contact with, the fundamental spiritual experience. Prolonged flights in lofty regions of speculation seldom yield any sure gain. I do not deny that there is a function for the speculative theologian; but it is becoming clear that you cannot claim for excursions into metaphysics such authority as attaches to the Christian experience of mankind. Matthew Arnold, it may be remembered, dealt satirically with the proposition that "salvation is unquestionably annexed to a right knowledge of the Godhead"; but his caustic criticism of the confusion of metaphysics with

religion is hardly needed now. Still the truth remains that a good deal of metaphysics is embedded in the official creeds of the Churches, especially where the creeds set forth the nature of the Trinity and the person of Christ; and it is not possible to show that these metaphysical propositions are vitally related to our spiritual faith, or should have the value for us which they had for theologians in the fourth century. In any case it cannot be claimed that they are bound up with the religion of men and women who are to-day striving to follow Christ. Theology need fear no criticism so long as it is loyal to its task and observes its limits; but if there is to be speculation it is important that it should appear under its own name, and not figure under the guise of universally approved religious doctrine.

Here then it appears that there is an urgent call for simplification, simplification which in some cases will take the form of omission. For the inevitable consequence of insisting on metaphysical doctrines, doctrines which may or may not be valid, is to place a stumbling-block in the way of many who are in sympathy with the Christian spirit, but who cannot understand why they should be subjected to tests which Christ never imposed. No one desires the Church of Christ to abandon what is vital; but we deny that these matters are vital, and there is always an evil in over-elaboration.

In these days the process is dangerous: it will help few and will repel many. One is forced to the conclusion that the religious temper of the age, so critical and questioning, is not favourable to the positive reconstruction of doctrine, for this can only come when the situation has grown clearer and the trend of religious thought more definite and affirmative. Hence the first steps in advance must be in the direction of what we have termed simplification; and loyalty to the practical religious consciousness demands this. With simplification will go the abandonment of the claim to finality. For finality is as little attainable in theology as in philosophy, and will be so long as spiritual experience is a developing process. Moreover, there are regions where clear definition is impossible. If so, a larger freedom of interpretation will have to be accorded to the conscience of the individual, for faith, like character, cannot be fashioned after one stereotyped pattern. And, after all, a doctrinal formulation, which seeks to set forth what Christian experience means for us, should rather serve as a guide and a bond of union than a permanent and rigid test.

V

NATIONAL RELIGION

PHILOSOPHERS have sometimes been reproached because they mistook words for things. The truth is we all fall more or less into bondage to the words we use, and we are often far from clear about their real meaning. But when an individual is forced by some Socratic questioner to define a term, he grows conscious that the word which seemed clear and simple is really vague. One of these common words whose meaning is elusive is the word *nation*. Multitudes employ it without a suspicion that it stands in need of explanation. Only when they are driven to define it, or to justify or reject a claim to nationality, do they begin to be aware that it is not quite easy to answer the query: What constitutes a nation?

Faced with this question we should all, I suppose, after reflexion deny that a nation just stands for a geographical expression, the people who are included within certain natural boundaries. These boundaries may enclose a homogeneous population, but they often do not, and the differences may

be of a pronounced character. Within a given area a population may be so divided in their sympathies and so antagonistic in their aims that they represent no real unity. The late Austrian Empire is an example, and many would say the same of Ireland. Nor does inclusion in a system of national government necessarily mean inclusion in the nation. The inclusion of Alsace and Lorraine in the German Empire after 1871 did not make the inhabitants belong to the German nation in sentiment and sympathy. To come, therefore, within the area ruled by a State does not settle the question of nationality. Nor is it more plausible to say that a nation is based on racial unity. It is quite possible to have vigorous national unity despite distinct differences of race. The United States of America claims to be a nation, yet it is a strange amalgam of races. The truth is that there are hardly any pure races in the Western world. No ingenuity will prove that the French or the German nation is built up of a single stock. The pure Germanic race is only a fiction of patriotic enthusiasts: there are Germans of the Alpine as well as of the Nordic type. The present European nations have been formed from different strata of population, and within them the anthropologist can point out the existence of distinct racial types. That nationality is determined by race is consequently an untenable claim.

If neither territory nor race constitutes a nation, then the principle of unity must be sought elsewhere. The secret of nationality lies within rather than without: it is psychological rather than physical. No doubt geography sets limits to the development of the sense of nationality, and the elements of a nation cannot be widely sundered in space. But the reason for this lies in the fact that great separation in place makes difficult or impossible a common history and tradition. For it is a common history and a common faith, common sympathies and common ideals, with all the associations and sentiments which spring from them, that form the cement which binds men into a national whole. The sympathies and memories born of historic struggles and aspirations constitute a spiritual heritage that is handed on from generation to generation, and helps to link past, present, and future in a spiritual unity. The existence of this heritage promotes a unity of outlook and aim in many individuals, and makes them feel that they belong to one another. Apart from a basis in history and tradition, the sentiment of nationality lacks the soil in which to strike its roots. It is, then, on these historic foundations that the nations of Europe have developed. Their laws, religion, and institutions have grown out of the historic life, and its memories and ideals are enshrined in their art and literature. This unity of feeling tends to

express itself in the attitude of one nation to other nations. So-called national policy is the reflexion of a nation's sense of what is its due: it expresses the consciousness of what it can claim in virtue of its history and achievements:

> "*Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento;*
> *Hæ tibi erunt artes, pacisque imponere morem,*
> *Parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos.*"

Weltmacht oder Niedergang is only a wildly exaggerated version of the same feeling.

In the modern world the progress of science and the expansion of commerce have developed a system of international relations unknown to the ancient. The old exclusiveness is no longer possible, and nations grow more and more interdependent because they become less and less self-sufficing. Commerce knows nothing of geographical boundaries, and every modern nation has to give to other nations that it may receive in return. In this situation the solidarity of peoples is emphasised, and there has come into being the cosmopolitan spirit with ideals of international unity and the brotherhood of races. The feeling has been growing, if slowly, and the experiences of the Great War have intensified it; for men have learned as never before the misery and ruin which national ambitions and selfishness can bring on the world. Civilisation, it is felt, must guard itself against a recurrence of this disaster: hence the idea of a League of Nations

united in the cause of peace, and ready to repress any act of wanton aggression which would lead to war. The difficulty in realising this plan arises from the fact that national sentiment, interest, and policy are forces stronger than the ties which bind nations to each other. The hope for the future lies in the strengthening of these ties and in the fuller development of the consciousness of a common good.

Here it is important to consider the bearing of religion on the solidarity of nations. Christianity, we all know, is a universal religion: it is not the monopoly of any one people, and it transcends differences of race and place. Its appeal is to humanity: its message of salvation is for the world: its teaching is that all men are brethren. The humanitarian spirit is the offspring of the religion of Christ, for His gospel quickened it to life and growth. Yet we cannot say that the ideal of Christian universalism has dominated the Western world. It has not proved strong enough to restrain and control the spirit or policy of nations even when that was leading them into ruinous wars with one another. We might almost say that hitherto Christianity has failed to curb national selfishness and violence. Christian nations when at war invoke religion in support of their cause, and claim that they are fighting on its side. They can do so more readily because the spirit and

temper of the nation are reflected in its religion, and religion is narrowed to a national concern. So Christianity is often made to support national as against universal ideals, another illustration of the strength of the sentiment of nationality and its power to reduce religion to a means. For this as well as for other reasons the justice and value of the idea of National Religion have been called in question, and the problem deserves careful consideration. It is at least plausible to say that, in the very notion of National Religion, there is something alien to the Christian spirit and ideal.

In offering some reflexions on this vexed question I think it will be most helpful to approach the subject from the historical side. Let us see how the conception developed and how it has maintained itself.

National Religion is not primitive because the nation is not the earliest form of human society. Earlier was the clan or tribe. The religion of this primitive group was local and purely collective, for the group itself was the religious unit, and the members, in virtue of their blood-kinship, shared in its worship. Tribal religion was narrow and exclusive; its appeal was external and its interest material, while the correct performance of the ritual was the thing that mattered. In this primitive world the personal side of religion was lost in the collective, and a man's gods were *ipso facto* the

gods of his group. To depart from the tribe meant to leave the old gods behind.

When men passed from the nomadic to the agricultural stage, an ampler and more secure means of subsistence made the formation of a larger and more complex society possible. By the fusion of tribes, brought about through conquest or pressure of circumstances, the outlines of a larger unity began to appear, and the tribal developed into the national organisation. The growth of this larger and more complex order, entailing as it did a multiplication of classes and activities and a consequent extension of ideas and aims, led to a great development of personal character and qualities. This meant a decisive advance in the religious consciousness. The tribal spirits gradually gave place to gods of wider sway, endowed with personal qualities, and presiding over departments of nature and the national life. Moreover, the monarchical principle in the nation contributed to form in men's minds the notion of a Supreme Ruler of the gods.

The national religions of antiquity were a great advance on the older tribal religions with their characterless spirits. Yet certain features of tribal religion survive, though in a new and larger setting. The unit of religion is still the social group, though the nation has taken the place of the tribe. Hence religion is not yet universal: it is bound up with the organisation of the particular State and

has no independent sphere: a man's membership in the State determines his religion even as the tribesman's religion was determined by his membership of the tribe. Moreover, though religion has gained a richer content and begins to be influenced by ethical ideas, yet in the national worship it is the regular performance of the ritual and ceremonial acts which is of importance. Inner and personal religion continues in the background. What the citizen personally thinks of the gods of the State does not matter much, provided that he is diligent and scrupulous in performing the prescribed acts of reverence. Loyalty to the State carries with it as a consequence the obligation of loyalty to the worship of the State, and patriotism and religion go hand in hand. This blending of the civic and the religious is seen in the fact that the officials of religion are also officials of the State. In ancient Egypt the king was likewise the highest sacerdotal dignitary. It was the same in Babylonia and Assyria. The chief archon who conducted public worship in Athens had the title of *Βασιλεύς*, and the head of the Roman State was also *pontifex maximus*. The question of inner aptitude for the religious office was hardly considered seriously. Hence the weakness of the system was, that under it religion became mechanical and external: it was subordinated to the interests of the State, and was easily degraded into a means for the accomplish-

ment of national ends. In these circumstances religion became a factor in national policy rather than an independent and uplifting spiritual life.

On these lines and under such limitations religion in the long run was bound to deteriorate, and none of the old national religions was able to maintain its vitality unimpaired. But religion was saved from the decay which threatened it by a fresh and significant movement of the religious spirit.

We have already noted how the rise and growth of the nation reacted on the individual, and brought about a deepening of the self-conscious and personal life. The new spirit by and by asserted itself in the religious sphere, and was instrumental in raising piety to a higher level. To some extent the movement was in the line of reaction from the religion of the nation, and this because the latter was no longer adequate to the new needs of which men were now conscious. The old State religions were official and formal, and above all they had no message for the individual as such. The development of the individualistic spirit in religion was stimulated when men saw the structure of the State menaced with dissolution, and were no longer sure of the national future. The pressure of the situation turned the human spirit back on itself. We have an illustration of this personal and subjective religion in the Israelitish prophets of the eighth century B.C. who denounced the formalism

of the official worship, and proclaimed the futility of its system of sacrifices. Their message was of a righteous God and their call for personal righteousness, the law graven on the heart and a 'right spirit within.' There comes here to utterance a new spiritual consciousness which emphasises the inner side of piety in contrast to its formal organisation in the national cultus. We observe a similar tendency to develop a personal religion over against the official religion in the growth of Mystery-Religions in Mediterranean lands, a movement whose beginnings go back to the seventh or eighth century B.C. The rise of these and other religious associations may be traced to the fresh needs of which men were becoming aware, needs which the national religions could not satisfy. People were experiencing the necessity of a personal and intimate communion with their god, for which the official religion, sober and formal, gave no scope. They felt, moreover, the need for some better fate for the soul after death than a feeble and attenuated existence in Hades, where the lot of a king was worse than that of the meanest wight on earth. The Mystery-Cults professed to meet these wants in the case of the initiated, though it must be confessed that in them magical and ritual elements prevailed over ethical and spiritual. The point of importance, however, is, that we have here an assertion of the personal

and subjective religious interest which led to a fresh religious development within the national religion and differentiated from it. For these cult-associations, it must be remembered, were voluntary unions, membership in which was conditioned by initiation and not by citizenship. The slave and the free-born could alike belong to them. In fact we have here the incipient idea of a spiritual corporation or church, where the bond of union between the members is purely religious. And as the time-honoured national religions fell into disrepute, as faith in their efficacy waned, individuals turned with increased avidity to fresh sources which promised to assuage their spiritual cravings.

When Christianity appeared and its communities began to spread through the Roman Empire, the new movement seemed to resemble that of the religious associations with which the Roman official world was already familiar. For the Churches were voluntary unions, with a cultus of their own, and with rites of initiation and of sacramental communion. Yet the difference, if superficially not great, was inwardly very marked. In the religion of Christ, unlike the Mystery-Religions, it was not the ritual and magical, but the ethical and spiritual elements which were dominant. Christianity was more than a passport to immortality: it was a new way of life that reflected the spirit of its Founder. Moreover, it claimed to be a universal

religion, not a religion for an elect few who cared to adopt it, but a faith in which Jew and Gentile, bond and free, ought to participate. In the case of a faith which made such claims, and whose adherents were conscious of an intense spiritual life, the passive toleration of the religion of the Empire was impossible. For Christians deemed it a degrading superstition, and especially where it took the form of a cult of the Cæsars. This was the point where the incompatibility of Christianity with the religious requirements of the Roman State was most keenly felt. The opposition was unavoidable; but it is also clear that the early Christians had no idea of ousting the official religion and replacing it with their own. Yet the decay of the official religion and its inadequacy to new and changing conditions on the one hand, and the resistless expansion of Christianity despite persecution on the other, precipitated this result in the beginning of the fourth century. The formal recognition of Christianity was really due to the logic of events, and it meant escape from a situation which was rapidly becoming impossible.

The action of Constantine implied more than that Christianity was now a *religio licita*. The truth was that scepticism had undermined the old religion, and the only faith which could take its place was Christianity. Hence Christianity was officially recognised as the religion of the Empire.

Was this a retrograde step? Did it mean that the religion of Christ lost in freedom and spirituality in receiving recognition at the hands of the State? Did the Christian religion at this point relapse to a lower level of development? There has been controversy on the subject, and the opinion we form about it is apt to be coloured by ideas and prejudices drawn from the life of the present. According to the scheme of values we bring to the interpretation of the past we may find here a notable gain to the cause of religion or a fateful step in a downward direction. An absolutely unbiased judgment may not be possible; but, if we look at the matter as dispassionately as we can, we shall probably conclude that neither opinion is entirely right. In becoming the religion of the Empire Christianity increased its status and sphere of influence, and was also in a better position to overcome the obstacles to missionary development. The problem of Christianising the pagan peoples of Europe would have been far harder had the Church been denied all official status and had it remained a religious sect among others in the Roman world. On the other hand, if there was a gain here, there was also a danger, the danger which wealth and power always prove to the inner and spiritual side of religion. Thus arose the tendency to secure the expansion of Christianity by arbitrary and external means, and political and

material ends became interwoven with the policy of the Church. The fruits were seen in the mediæval period. The Church's official head, nominally *servus servorum Christi*, was often a worldly-minded potentate grasping and ambitious. The lust of the Church for temporal power was significant of the secularising of religion. None the less the conception of a universal and Catholic Church was directly due to the tradition and ideal of the Roman Empire, which strove to include within itself many lands and races and to extend to them one system of law and government. The decay of the Empire at its heart proved fatal to the achievement of this dream of world-dominion; but the ideal, passing from the political to the religious sphere, was continued in the Holy Catholic Church under the headship of the Roman pontiffs. A universal Church, one in faith and government, ritual and service, became the recognised religious system, until it finally broke down at the Reformation. And one must admit that this system, despite the abuses which grew up within it, did set forth in an impressive way the truth that Christianity was a universal religion which transcended all differences of race and place. Nor can we deny that, in days of violence and oppression, the Church often proved the shield of the helpless and restrained the hand of the tyrant.

The increasing corruption of the Church, the

mechanising of religion and the abuses which flowed from it, all helped to bring about the decay and dissolution of the system. But, apart from this, during the later mediæval period a fresh and important factor began to be prominent, and it was powerfully to affect the religious situation. I refer to the growth of the national spirit among the peoples of Europe, and this bore fruit in the tendency to maintain national interests and aims even when these conflicted with the claims of the Church. The disputes between Pope and Emperor in the earlier Middle Age were now succeeded by conflicts between the papacy as representing the ecclesiastical and the kings as representing a national policy. This national feeling showed itself in the criticism and condemnation of papal privileges and exactions, and was sometimes strong enough to brave the threat of papal interdict. The peoples were conscious that they had rights in the Church of their own country, rights which they were not prepared to hand over to Rome. The presence and influence of this feeling must be taken into account if we are to understand the trend of events at the Reformation.

The Reformation marked the disruption of the hitherto undivided Church in Western Europe, and the substitution for it in various lands of National Protestant Churches. The vitality and energy of the national sentiment contributed

greatly to this transformation of Catholicism into nationalism in religion. The new Protestant Churches claimed to represent the nation on its religious side and to express its spiritual faith. As spiritual organisations owning the Headship of Christ they were not the creation of the State, though recognised by and in alliance with it. The creeds in which these national Churches expressed their doctrinal beliefs were made an element in the concordat between the Churches and the national governments.

It is important to keep in mind the presuppositions which underlay the formation of Protestant Churches as national institutions. Revolt against the tyranny of Rome did not mean that the Protestant theologians stood for religious toleration in the modern sense, and where Protestantism took the place of Romanism they were not prepared to admit the rights of Nonconformity. The Protestant creeds, though they were not put forward with the dogmatic assurance of Roman Catholicism, were still supposed to be in the main valid statements of religious doctrine which the individual was not entitled to reject, and the form of Church government adopted was thought to be the one most conformable to the Scriptures. No provision was made for the modification of these systems in the light of growing knowledge and experience. The consequences of this rigidity,

this quasi finality, were ere long to show themselves. The rights of conscience and private judgment, which the Reformers invoked when they repudiated the Roman Catholic system, could be readily urged as a reason for rejecting some of their own tenets. And when a flood of new ideas was pouring into the modern world, changing and enlarging men's whole outlook on life, it was vain to expect that criticism would be dumb in matters of religion. This spirit bore fruit in the breaking away of new religious organisations from the Protestant Churches, and the multiplication of sects was part of the price Europe had to pay for the Reformation. The price was not too high; yet the difficulties which ensued were very great, and they remain with us still.

One consequence of the divisions which developed within Protestantism has been the disposition in modern days to question the validity of national religion itself. That idea, it is argued, is no longer practicable, and the proper issue of the whole trend of modern thought is perfect freedom, toleration, and individualism in matters of faith.[1] And it is futile to deny that those who take up this attitude can point to difficulties and inconsistencies in the position of the Protestant National

[1] "The modern world," says Troeltsch, "is filled with the sheerest subjectivism in religious things" *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. ii. p. 857.

Churches. Let us consider what some of these are.

In idea a National Church claims to represent the nation in a religious aspect, in other words, to be the corporate expression of the nation's faith. Yet in modern times this can hardly be said to be an accurate statement of the actual facts. For with the decline of religious certainty and the decay of faith in authoritative religious truth the State has come to include many who do not belong to any Church. The civil government, where it is not hostile to the Church, at least refrains from actively supporting it. According to the Westminster divines it is the duty of the civil magistrate "to take order that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, and that the truth of God be kept pure and entire," but in practice he has ceased to exercise any such function. Even in the sphere of education the State shows a great disinclination to subsidise the teaching of dogmatic religion. The spirit springs from the conviction that doctrinal Christianity can no longer win the undivided allegiance of the body of the people; and so the claim is made that the State ought to be strictly neutral in all that concerns religion. Churches should be treated as voluntary associations to be supported by those who sympathise with them. But let the State, which represents the whole nation, not intrude into a sphere where

division of opinion is rife; let it occupy itself with secular interests about which there is no dispute. This movement is definite in its aims: it gives a reason for itself and is so far consistent. Whether developed to its issue it would conduce to the national well-being is another question.

The polemic against National Religion is reinforced from another quarter. In this instance the hostility to a National Church is not based on antagonism to doctrinal religion as such; it is defended in the name of justice and religious equality. The State Church, it is pointed out, is no longer the only Church, and may even be the Church of a minority of the people. Nonconformity has increased greatly in modern times, and in some lands we find a number of Free Churches owning no allegiance to the State Church and supporting themselves from their own resources. The existence of a Church in alliance with the State, it is argued, constitutes an injustice to these Churches, for it means that the State, representing the whole nation, identifies itself with one religious body to the exclusion of others. The logical conclusion, if justice is to be done, is that the State Church should lose the privilege of its so-called national position, and become *de jure*, what it is *de facto*, a religious denomination alongside other denominations. Hence the plea for disestablishment in the interests of religion itself. On the

other hand, to argue, as has been done, that it is invidious for the State to select a particular religious body for its patronage and ignore the others, is a travesty of the facts, and neglects the historical development of the present situation. But it may be true that for any new State to establish a Church would be impracticable. And it is right to acknowledge that in some countries, in certain States of the American Union, for example, where Churches were at first established, the difficulties involved ultimately led to the abandonment of the system. In other lands, for instance in Ireland and Wales, where the National Church was in a decided minority, the pressure of opinion has led to measures of disestablishment being enacted. A similar movement, though prompted by somewhat different motives, has been carried out in France. What has been done in certain cases should be done everywhere, so it is contended, for the principle at issue admits of no compromise. Persons of this way of thinking regard national religions as a legacy of the past which has ceased to have a value for the present, and has even become a source of injustice. The logical solution is to abandon the conception altogether, and to fall back on voluntary religious associations which have no connexion with the State. This, it is claimed, would be a return to the apostolic conception, and only then will the Churches be at

liberty to realise their ideals and free to develop apart from alien influences.

Within Established Churches themselves a feeling has grown up that their position entails awkward limitations, which in the interests of religion ought to be removed. A claim is made for greater internal autonomy and for larger powers of development. The feeling of which I am speaking is not by any means exclusively, but it is prominently, connected with the place of the creeds in the National or State Churches. The product of an older time, when the intellectual environment was very different, these Confessions no longer accurately and adequately express the mind of the Churches. They are important as historic monuments but not as expressions of present religious values, and they contain some doctrines which are a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. The need for simplification as well as restatement is evident. Yet the National Churches in virtue of their constitutions have no real power to meet this need, though in practice a liberal view may be taken of what adhesion to a creed implies. For the creedal system is involved in the terms of the alliance between Church and State, nor is any modification of doctrine permissible on the part of the Church unless it receives the consent and sanction of the State. This dependence on the State, which in modern times has become more

and more neutral in matters of religious doctrine, imposes a serious disability on the Church when it is confronted with new conditions of thought and life. This disability is not removed by a liberal interpretation of what subscription to a Confession means, so long as the Confession remains in its entirety the legal and official statement of the Church's doctrine. The pressure of this situation has stimulated the demand on the part of many within the Church, that the Church should have the inherent right to modify or develop its doctrinal system. With this demand goes a plea, if not for the separation of Church and State, at all events for a reconstruction of the terms of union between them.

It will be apparent, then, that there are different currents of opinion which combine to raise the problem of the validity of National Religion, or call for a reconsideration of the conditions on which it is now based. That the *status quo* will continue indefinitely few or none will suppose. If, then, we set aside the latter as a possible issue, there remain two lines on which a solution of the problem may be sought: (1) The abandonment of the idea of National Religion as a legacy from the past which has ceased to have value. (2) The modification of the existing relations between Church and State.

The scheme of an absolute separation of Church and State is the more drastic one, and it carries

out a principle to the bitter end. Those who dislike compromise will welcome it. To prophesy is seldom wise, but it is not impossible that this is the idea which will ultimately prevail in the Western world. On the other hand, we must consider, whether to carry out the principle thoroughly in the present or near future would not involve loss as well as gain, and the loss might be greater than the gain. The step would mean the sacrifice of the idea of National Religion in any operative form, and would relegate the Church to the position of a voluntary association, subject like any similar association only to the common law of the land. There are, no doubt, circumstances in which this solution of the question would be the only practicable one. If the citizens of a country were utterly divided over religion, some having no religious convictions while those who had were at variance in their beliefs, National Religion in this case would be absurd: it would be a name for what did not exist. The situation would be quite different if the majority of the people professed adherence to Christian principles, and believed in their spiritual and social value. In this connexion a good deal will depend on the view we take of the nature and functions of the State, whether we are disposed to think a national recognition of religion is desirable or not. Those who think the functions of the State should be restricted to administering

law and justice and securing the protection of life and property, will naturally object to any recognition on the part of the State of a duty to religion. This theory, if once common, is now held by few, and it is obviously contradicted by the policy of modern States. Aristotle's view, that the State exists to promote the true well-being of the people (ἕνεκα τοῦ εὖ ζῆν) prevails, and every State is seeking to improve the health, education, and character of its citizens. Why, then, should the State ignore religion? Those who declare it should do so must justify themselves by saying the facts connected with religion demand such an attitude. For instance, they may contend that religion is a subject about which there is great uncertainty and little concord of opinion: in the circumstances it is best for the State to fight shy of religion, proclaiming its own neutrality and allowing every man to take his own line in this matter. Let us try to make clear to ourselves whether this *laissez-faire* policy does not involve a loss to society; and it appears to me to be exposed to two dangers at least.

In the first place, it is very doubtful if the moral life and character of a nation can be sustained apart from any religious ideas and sanctions. I am, of course, not speaking of individual cases, but of society as a whole. And here, it seems to me, the question is not whether religion is needed to

reinforce morality by a doctrine of rewards for the good and punishments for the wicked in a future life; for the moral effects of this doctrine are disputable. The point I would rather urge is the inner incompleteness of the moral consciousness and the consequent need of taking it up into a larger view of the world. You may try to achieve this by reducing the moral to the natural order, and by interpreting ethical values in naturalistic terms. But in this reading of its nature the very spirit of the moral life suffers violence; for moral obligation can never be translated into terms of expediency. The other and more convincing method is to interpret the moral consciousness from above, in other words, to regard morality as an element in the wider life of religion and to find the ground of all ethical values in a Divine and ultimate Value. The moral order remains incomplete without religion, for religion brings into human life the conception of final ends and destinies. One has no sympathy with the gibe flung at 'mere morality,' but the truth is that the moral point of view is not absolute. If this be so, it becomes hard to justify the principle that the State should promote the moral well-being of its members but ignore religion, which completes and inspires the moral consciousness. It would be otherwise if the moral life were self-explanatory and self-sufficing; and in practice we do not find

that when the religious life of a nation is formal and dead, its moral life is healthy and vigorous. Moreover, the indifference of the State to religion may be taken by the individual as lending a certain justification to his own personal indifference. Again, abandon the religious interpretation of morality and you inevitably fall back on the naturalistic helped out by the idea of evolution, with the result that materialistic and selfish motives will be reinforced in the nation and the individual. And the growth of such a spirit is perilous in the extreme: when it gains the undisputed mastery it constitutes a threat to civilisation.

The other danger concerns the character of religion, and it lies in the direction of extreme subjectivism. National recognition of religion and the existence of a National Church lend a certain security and stability to the exercise of religion, and make some religious developments, to say the least, less likely. The refusal of the State to recognise any form of religion encourages the belief that religion is merely a matter of private concern; and this individualistic spirit is apt to find expression in the multiplication of sects. The existence of a National Religion will not do away with this tendency, so long at least as the rights of private judgment are acknowledged. But it makes the process less easy, for it ensures the presence of a more temperate spiritual atmosphere

and a wider outlook than is possible in the sphere of mere subjectivism: under these conditions sects find it more difficult to multiply and maintain themselves. If it be argued that the development of individualism and sectarianism is not an evil, we deny that this is so. Free trade in religion spells activity of a kind, but the atmosphere engendered is not a spiritual one; for it fosters the growth of the rivalry and bitterness which make co-operation for large spiritual ends difficult or impossible. Moreover, these divisions weaken the Church in its conflict with materialism and worldliness; since a united Church which has a history and tradition behind it, and claims the loyalty of many, will prevail where a multitude of sects can do little. This truth is being forced on men's minds in these anxious days, and is inspiring the movement in various lands towards Christian union. For union is strength. The problem is whether the idea of National Religion is fitted to play a valuable part in this movement towards union.

Let me note another element of gain, and that of a more positive kind, which may flow from the acceptance of the principle of National Religion. This gain comes through the sentiments, the devotion, the loyalty which the nation evokes. We have already remarked that the nation, its value and its claims, are very living and operative ideas in the minds of men, and they are still far stronger

than cosmopolitan and humanitarian ideals. And National Churches which have grown up within the nation, sharing in its development and playing a part in its struggles, have a historic prestige and exercise an appeal which is not possible for a sect. In this way loyalty to the Church of a nation partakes in the feelings which gather round the nation: it is enriched and inspired by memories of the past and sentiments of the present. To feel his membership in the nation, and to realise what that implies, means that a man is lifted out of his narrow and selfish ways and is touched with the generous spirit of a larger life. "Who dies if England lives?" There is something similar in the movement of the religious spirit, and the linking of the two in National Religion may be a gain to both. A provincial spirit often rules in churches, and one would welcome in them wider motives and a larger outlook. We can therefore discern a gain in conserving the idea of National Religion in so far as that implies the union of religious aspirations with what is best in the traditions and ideals of the nation as a whole.

Some who sympathise with the spirit of these remarks might, however, object, that to make the idea of National Religion really fruitful would, in these days, be too difficult, and the attempt would entail many dangers. There is the obstacle of wide religious differences within the nation, and

there is the danger of producing an 'official religion' instead of a free and spiritual one. I do not deny that there may be an element of truth in this contention, and it would not be wise to treat it lightly. Yet the very existence of difficulties is a challenge to thought; and if we regard the problem as not insoluble, on what lines are we to seek a solution? This is a large question, and I cannot pretend to discuss it adequately; but let me set down one or two things that have to be kept in mind when dealing with the subject.

The conception of National Religion has developed historically, and many elements of value in it are connected with historic traditions and sentiments. The present religious situation makes it impossible to realise the idea in its older form when the Church really represented the nation on its religious side; and there is little hope, in the face of current developments, that the earlier condition of things can be restored. For this reason we have admitted that the establishment of a National Church *de novo* would not be practicable to-day; and to reconstitute the alliance of Church and State after it has once been severed would, to say the least, be far from easy. In a question such as we are considering the essential thing is to recognise what is practicable in the given situation, not what might be feasible were the conditions different. We restrict ourselves therefore to the case where a National Religion and

a National Church are living and active, and we ask ourselves under what conditions they can continue in the modern world. The existing relations of Church and State, as we have seen reason to believe, cannot be permanently maintained. One of the dangers of a State religion has been the tendency to subject the Church to the State, and to deny the Church internal freedom and the power of development. The risk here is that religion may become stereotyped and mechanical; and the formal and external side of religion cannot prevail without the inner spirit deteriorating. The reproach of deadness has often been cast at State Churches, perhaps not always fairly, but sometimes the reproach has been duly earned. The bondage of the Church to the State, and the bringing of religion into the sphere of political aims and ambitions, constitute a peril to religion; and no relation of the Church to the civil government, if it exposes the Church to this peril, can be deemed satisfactory. To make the Church a counter in a national policy is to secularise religion.

It would seem then that if National Religion is to be conserved, the existing relation of Church and State will have to be modified. The direction of this change will be in the line of excluding all right of arbitrary interference on the part of the State, and of granting to the Church much greater freedom and powers of self-government. So long,

of course, as there is a concordat between the nation and the Church, the freedom of the latter cannot be an absolutely unchartered liberty. One party to a contract ought not to be bound while the other is perfectly free. Hence spiritual freedom cannot mean that the Church may depart radically from Christian principles and still claim to continue the historic National Church. In the event of such a departure the State has the right to reconsider its attitude and to withdraw its recognition from the Church. No doubt you may take a narrow view of what the abandonment of principles means, and the modification of a single doctrine has been construed in this sense. But if a National Religion is to be possible in the future, it is essential that a broad view should be taken of what constitutes a change of principle. When there is a substantial continuity between the past and present, religion suffers no disruption, and inner changes are compatible with the preservation of a real identity as we see in organic growth. It is essential, therefore, that in matters of organisation and doctrinal statement the State should leave the Church to solve its problems in its own way. At present the disabilities from which the National Churches suffer are patent, and hamper the reforms and readjustments necessary to the health and progress of a religious organisation. The consciousness of this defect is inspiring the movement for spiritual freedom and

autonomy in the Church of England. In the Draft Articles put forward by the Church of Scotland in the interests of union between the Scottish Presbyterian Churches the claim is made that the United Church shall be supreme in all matters affecting its discipline and government, and shall be free to interpret and restate its doctrines in its own way, though always in harmony with Scripture as the Supreme Rule of faith and life. Thus in Article V. it is claimed, that "this Church has the inherent right . . . to declare the sense in which it understands the Confession of Faith, to modify the forms of expression therein, or to formulate other doctrinal statements, . . . but always in agreement with the Word of God and the fundamental doctrines of the Christian Faith contained in the said Confession, of which agreement the Church shall be the sole judge." The statement is interesting, because it shows the felt need of loyalty to the Christian tradition on the one hand, and on the other the consciousness that the Church must be at liberty to interpret and revise its doctrines on its own initiative and authority. The truth is, that only on such conditions can the vitality and progress of a National Church be secured, since only a Church possessing the inherent right of development can meet the needs of a developing society. For the State to repress or control the develop-

ment of the Church would do harm to spiritual religion: the inner truth and worth of religion would suffer. The ultimate goal of religion lies not in the region of mundane ends, but in a transcendent realm; and it is ruinous to thes pirit of religion if it is made subservient to temporal aims. The kingdom of the spirit is not of this world.

Nevertheless, if we regard the nation as a school of character, and conceive the end or ideal of the nation in a broad and generous way, then the national and the religious spirit are capable of a harmonious relationship. A nation no more than an individual lives to itself merely: it has a duty to humanity, a part to play in realising that universal human good which religion envisages as the Kingdom of God. Hence a worthy National Religion lends no support to a narrow nationalism. It knows that exclusive gain and material efficiency mean far less than the development of those universal spiritual values which alone yield abiding satisfaction. For nation as for individual, religion is the realm of the universal and eternal. As Hegel has said: "All nations know that it is in the religious consciousness that they possess the truth; and they have therefore regarded their religion as that which gives dignity and peace to their lives." If a large and spiritual view be taken of the vocation of the nation, if its obligation to minister to the wider good of humanity be recog-

nised, then through the medium of the National Religion it will express its deeper ideals and aspirations.

We conclude that elements of value attach to the conception of National Religion, and for this reason the idea is not to be calmly and readily abandoned. Yet it is right to ask if it can be taken to be a final stage of the religious consciousness. If Christianity is a universal religion, a religion for humanity, can we suppose that it will remain finally fixed in different national types? Can a national expression of religion be more than a stage which mediates the transition to a truly universal religion? The appeal of Christianity is certainly universal, and already Paul recognised that in Christ there was neither Jew nor Gentile. Beyond dispute the Christian spirit is broader and deeper than national distinctions: its goal is a spiritual kingdom where the test of membership is purely spiritual. If this be so, National Religion falls short of a full expression of the Christian ideal. But actual conditions set limits to the realisation of an ideal. And as we look out on the world to-day we cannot clearly forecast a time when nationalism will yield to humanitarianism, and national ends cease to play a decisive part in history. So long as this is so, National Religion as the expression of what is highest in the national spirit will neither be meaningless nor unreal.

Nevertheless the international and humanitarian ideal is no mere dream, and on its growing influence in the sphere of national policy the progress and well-being of mankind depend. National Religion, if it be free and spiritual, is a leaven in the heart of a people purifying it from selfishness and exclusiveness and deepening in it the consciousness of a universal human good. In this way it plays a part in preparing the way for a universal kingdom of the spirit.

VI

CONTROVERSY: ITS MEANING AND VALUE[1]

IT may be of interest to consider the conditions and motives which prompt men to engage in argument with one another, and to discuss the possible elements of value in the process of controversy. The latter word has an ill repute, and is apt to suggest a tale of futile strife and embittered feelings. The cynical observer is ready to express the doubt whether anything is ever really settled in this way. How much, for instance, have metaphysicians and theologians made of their long drawn arguments with one another? To an age which has grown rather weary of intellectual disputes, and has grown distrustful of their value, it may be worth while to raise the question: What is the good of controversy? In the long run does it settle anything? When the din of dispute has died away are people any nearer to the truth? Does it not often happen that the eager bout of thrust and parry ends without definite gain

[1] The substance of an address delivered to the St. Andrews Branch of the English Association.

to either side? as was the case at the battle of Sheriffmuir,

> "Where some say that we wan,
> And some say that they wan,
> And some say that nane wan at a' man."

Or, if the heroes of the intellectual strife at the end of the day are 'of the same opinion still,' is it just possible that the onlookers, who saw more of the game than the combatants, have been led to see where the truth lies?

These are natural questions, questions easy to ask, but it is perhaps not so easy to give clear-cut answers to them. There are controversies and controversies, and much depends on the spirit in which they are waged and the way in which they are developed. Some argumentative discussions convince nobody, and leave everybody in a worse position than before. In other cases an honest controversy may reveal fallacies, dissipate prejudices, and bring men a step forward on the way to truth.

The opinion of an individual on the value of argument is apt to be coloured by his personal experiences rather than by a dispassionate survey of the field. In a letter to the *Spectator* the late Herbert Spencer once wrote that his experience was, that in nine cases out of ten your opponent began by misrepresenting you, and then proceeded to attack you for saying what you never said.

Among people in this country the tendency to disparage controversy has undoubtedly been accentuated by the recent history of politics. For a number of years prior to the War political dispute was exceptionally keen and bitter, and despite all the wealth of arguments employed neither party appeared to make any impression on the opinions of the other. In former days, votes were often gained and lost as the result of debate in the House of Commons. But all that has been changed. An imposing array of evidences and an eloquent marshalling of arguments have had little or no influence on the real issue. At the crack of the party whip our obedient legislators trooped into their appointed lobby, without weighing, and often without hearing, the arguments which had gone before. It is not surprising that, in face of these and similar facts, some persons were beginning to ask themselves whether there was any use in arguing at all. Was there not another and a more excellent way? *Stet pro ratione voluntas.*

It would be unfortunate, I think, if many came to adopt a *Machtspruch* like this. For the principle might easily become a thing of evil omen, like the 'will to power' which has proved such a dangerous obsession to the Germans. At the same time it is right to admit that we are living in an age which has grown a little weary of controversy, and

faith in reason has declined. To some extent I sympathise with this feeling, and agree that it is easy to exaggerate the claims of reason. And yet reason beyond all question has a large and legitimate place in life, and argument should be the expression of reason. But one must recognise that antagonism to intellectualism is a note of our time, and is reflected in the sphere of philosophy and in the sphere of social life. The indifference or even hostility to controversy is a particular expression of this general tendency. Men tell us they have their convictions and they mean to keep them, but they will not enter into any controversy in regard to them. For controversy is commonly indecisive, and in the main is an unprofitable thing. And, of course, controversy has its unworthy side. It frequently degenerates to petty quibbling, passes into misrepresentation, or even sinks to the level of personal abuse. Controversialists are often more keen to gain a personal or a party triumph than to elicit the truth, and so they alienate the sympathy of fair-minded people. But the abuse does not destroy the use, and controversy has a better as well as a baser side. It will be part of my object in this paper to bring out this better side, and to show that argument has a part to play in the development of knowledge. It is certainly not by accident that men argue with one another in order to reach an understanding. In the conflict

of minds light arises: "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." The argumentative discussion of differences in our judgments is really an endeavour of the spirit of reason in us striving to make our conception of things harmonious. For the native trend of our minds is always towards an orderly and connected outlook on the world. Though controversy arises out of divergency of opinion, it presupposes a real if often an undeveloped faith in the unity and consistency of knowledge. And when it is loyal to its ideal it is a stage on the highway that leads to truth.

In further developing my subject I shall first touch on the region where controversy is possible, and then go on to say a little on its historical origin and growth.

The sphere of controversy is a borderland, the land of half lights which lies between the full day of knowledge and the dark night of ignorance. The human pilgrim must traverse this land of light and shadow to emerge into the open sunshine of truth. This region is what Plato called the domain of opinion, or δόξα, which stands in contrast to knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), knowledge which is systematic and so self-verifying. The nearer we are to one extreme or the other the less room is there for conflict of opinion. Thus in the case of a sum in arithmetic or a proposition in geometry,

the presuppositions are so simple and the relations involved so clear that there is no ground for conflict of opinion. If an individual chose to assert that two and two made five, or that the interior angles of a triangle were less than two right angles, it would be mere folly to argue with him. The certainty is so great, granted certain assumptions, that rational controversy is excluded. On the other hand, it would be just as futile to engage in an argument as to whether the planet Neptune is inhabited, or as to the distribution of political power in Europe five hundred years hence. In the one case we are dealing with an object so distant in space, and in the other so far off in time, that our affirmations would lack any real basis. For an affirmation must have some ground: it must be related in some way to what we already know. And our existing knowledge does not yield an insight into the conditions determining the answer to such problems which would warrant a conclusion on one side or the other. To make controversy profitable there must be an accepted basis of knowledge by which to test the arguments advanced: otherwise the opponents merely beat the air. Hence it is intelligible how, with the development of knowledge in the individual and the race, some old controversies are closed, while things once generally believed have become matters of keen dispute. People do not any longer argue

whether the earth goes round the sun or not, though they have begun to question the Newtonian conception of absolute space.

It is not, therefore, on the lower stages of human culture that controversy emerges. Primitive men had their quarrels, but they knew nothing of controversy in the proper sense of the word. Early man moved in a world ruled by custom and tradition, and he did not venture to think for himself. His beliefs were those of his clan or tribe, and they came to him as naturally as his language. In other words, he had not reached the stage of reflective thinking, and his mind was dominated by the social whole or group to which he belonged. His beliefs were a heritage from the immemorial past, nor did he trouble to make one belief consistent with another. The felt need for coherency in ideas marks the beginning of a higher stage of culture. When men clearly recognise that their beliefs are conflicting, they are prompted to discuss their truth or error.

The Greeks first among Western peoples made the intellectual advance which made controversy possible. The beginnings of philosophy in Greece mark the period when, for the Greek mind, the old and naive view of things was passing away. It had ceased to be possible to account for things by telling stories about them; and the Ionian thinkers tried to explain the world in a way which

appealed to reason. The explanations they offered were crude and one-sided, but the new attitude of mind was of the highest importance. In its actual results pre-Socratic philosophy seemed to yield a number of conflicting views of the world, each of which claimed its circle of adherents. Was there a way out of this impasse into which thinking seemed to have led men? The suggestion lay to hand that the trouble was caused by people trying to solve questions which the human mind was inherently incapable of answering. Universal conclusions of this kind are really impossible: what each man perceives to be true, that is true for him, and 'man is the measure.' The result was scepticism of the human mind as an instrument, and doubt of its ability to reach objective truth.

The contradictions of earlier thinkers impressed the Sophists with the possibility of arguing for very diverse conclusions, and they were quick to see how this possibility might be turned to practical account. The art of controversy might be made an element in education: the faculty of making 'the worse appear the better reason' was valuable for the pushing youth and the aspiring politician. That the Sophists developed keenness of mind and subtlety of intellectual fence among the Greeks is undoubted: their weakness was their indifference to the higher purpose of controversy. With them

it was in the main only a clever accomplishment to be turned to personal advantage. To remedy this defect, at once moral and intellectual, was the aim of Socrates, and he sought to infuse a new earnestness into argument. In order to do so he undermined and brought to the ground the structure of fancied knowledge and strove to build again on a stable basis. Hence he sought to reach general ideas or valid definitions by means of his so-called 'inductive discourses.' These were in the main friendly controversies, in which he endeavoured, by asking questions and urging objections, to lead his pupils towards the truth.

The *Dialogues* of Plato help us to realise how much was implied in the controversial method of Socrates and to what comprehensive ends it was directed. As Plato came to envisage the process of dialectic it was really the controversy of the mind with itself by which it struggles upward from the shadowy realm of uncritical opinion to the bright and abiding realm of the true and good. The vision of the good was the reward of the disciplined dialectician. Controversy as dialectic has now become a scientific method of reaching truth. To follow the argument loyally 'whithersoever it leads' was the noble conception of controversy in the minds of Socrates and Plato.

The dialectic of the Schoolmen reveals a great decline from this lofty ideal. It is possible to pay

exaggerated attention to the formal side of argument and to magnify subtlety for its own sake. "In the Mediæval period," says Höffding, "thinking developed a formal acuteness, a facility in drawing distinctions and setting forth arguments, which is quite without a parallel." Speaking of this passion for dialectic a writer in the earlier part of the sixteenth century remarks: "Provided one can defend himself logically he passes for an able man. The character, not less than the intelligence, is ruined by disputation." Nor is it open to question that the controversies of the Schoolmen were strangely unfruitful. Nor is it difficult to explain the cause of this barrenness. Controversy, if it is not to be futile, must set out from a basis of knowledge, and it must deal with data which are capable of yielding further knowledge. To define and distinguish, to refine and dwell on the form of the argument, is a useless thing if these conditions are not present. The Schoolmen strove to reach results on matters where they had no adequate data from which to draw conclusions. Hence their astuteness and subtlety could not save their controversies from being sterile, and they drove men through reaction to seek after some more excellent way. Not through syllogisms, but, as Bacon said, by becoming 'the servant and interpreter of nature,' was man to make fresh progress in knowledge.

In the light of this short historical retrospect we may go on to make some general remarks on the meaning and value of controversy. Now you cannot argue unless there is something to argue about, and there must at least be some basis of knowledge from which you set out and to which you can refer. But in developing conclusions on this basis men may put forward discordant judgments which cannot, as they stand, be reconciled with one another. If one is right the other must be wrong, though perhaps none of them is true. The person who controverts the proposition advanced by another in favour of one advanced by himself has the task of trying to show that his own conclusion is validly drawn, while the conclusion of his opponent does not fairly construe the data or commits some fallacy in the process of inference. It is well to bear in mind that controversialists implicitly commit themselves to the view, that reason is capable of dealing with the subject and that they are to be loyal to the argument and true to the 'rigour of the game.' He who claims to refute on rational grounds should himself be willing to be refuted on the same terms. Controversy is, or ought to be, an intellectual process, the aim of which is to establish or set aside claims to truth, and the issue falls to be decided on grounds of reason. For a controversialist to enter the arena and support his case by arguments which appeal to reason, and

then to shift his ground and demand a judgment in his favour on another basis, is inadmissible. Of course an individual, though consenting to discuss a subject, may tell us at the outset that it really transcends reason; yet even here it is not evident how discussion is to promote the solution of the problem. But to accept reason as a test, and then in the end to decline its jurisdiction, is inconsistent. For instance, some one sets out to defend a cherished conviction by argument: he finds, however, that he is met by counter-arguments to which he is unable to reply, and nevertheless he cannot bring himself to abandon his contention. In this dilemma he takes refuge, perhaps, in an appeal to his conscience, and maintains that his conscience assures him he is right. To dislodge him from this convenient asylum is impossible, for he has carried his case to another court. The contradiction lies in accepting and then rejecting the jurisdiction of reason. Let me give another illustration of the same difficulty in a typical form. Most people are aware that theological controversies have been among the most fierce and prolonged, as they have frequently proved among the most futile. And a good deal of the trouble has been caused by theologians changing their court of appeal in the course of the discussion. They begin by invoking reason to support their doctrines, and in the name of reason try to defend them

against objections. But when it becomes too hard to defend their position in this way they fall back on authority, and insist the doctrines ought to be accepted because they are founded on revelation. It may be true that certain doctrines cannot be rationalised, but it can only cause confusion if you begin by admitting the rights of reason to discuss them, and end by discarding reason in favour of authority. Such a method cannot yield a fruitful issue.

Controversy, if it is to be of any value, must proceed on a definite principle throughout, and this principle, it seems to me, is that of logical and consistent thinking. Now I shall be told, and told truly, that man is more than a thinking being: he is an active personality moved by feelings and interests, desires and aspirations, and these are not to be reduced to logic. And our critic will justly add, that feelings and interests are the moving causes of controversy, and men do not argue from a pure love of truth or from devotion to intellectual consistency. In this connexion I think it is important that we should remember the distinction between the psychological and the logical points of view. If you are to understand the genesis of a controversy and the features which mark its development, then some psychological study of the play of feelings, motives, and interests is essential. For these are present at every point,

and influence the attitude of those who take part in the argument. Take for illustration the famous Arian controversy. The historian of that renowned dispute, if he knows his business, will not treat the subject as one of pure logic. Behind the discussion, and lending force to it, were convictions growing out of feelings of value which powerfully affected the whole debate. Moreover, we shall never do justice to those engaged in controversy if we ignore 'the personal equation,' in other words, if we do not regard the individuals concerned psychologically and consider how their convictions have developed. A harsh criticism passed on an argument might be justifiable on logical grounds, and yet from a psychological point of view be unjust to the person who advanced it. Much bitterness is often caused by those who overlook this fact. In this reference it is interesting to quote an admission of Hegel's, who confessed that in attacking opinions which seemed to him false he "forgot to allow for the manner in which they were present in particular individuals." This means that controversy was so much for him a matter of impersonal logic that he was often unfair to those who differed from him. The controversialist who honestly seeks to bring an opponent round to his way of thinking should never commit this error, for by so doing he makes ultimate agreement impossible. The man whose feelings

are wounded does not will to be convinced by his adversary.

But, granting all this, we have still to remember that the main business of controversy is to develop an argument consistently to its logical issue. And there is a real danger of allowing psychological elements to intrude into the sphere where logic should rule. The temptation is great to permit personal feelings and interests to prevent or prejudice the legitimate course of the argument. Most controversies are prompted by feelings of some kind, and probably there are none in which some emotional interest is not involved. It is just this activity of feeling, affecting the judgments of value, which makes agreement as the issue of argument often so hard to reach. The trouble would be less if the question were merely one of the validity of the inferences to be drawn from certain data. But the fact is, as we shall see, that feelings and sentiments colour the interpretation of the data, so that they often do not have the same meaning for the disputants. When the feelings are deeply enlisted on opposite sides controversy tends to become unprofitable: in such a heated atmosphere discussion is apt to be diverted to side-issues, and it readily passes into verbal wrangling or even degenerates into personal abuse. The result is a mere waste of time and energy.

It may be well to repeat that an appeal to the

feelings in controversy is inadmissible, and especially when it implies the setting up of feeling as a standard of truth. For feeling is individual and variable: it is no objective standard of judgment, and proves an elusive test of truth. Most propositions, however untenable, may claim the support of some person's feeling, and feeling is a convenient house of refuge for those who are worsted in argument. Feeling explains the tenacity with which an individual clings to an opinion in the face of evidence against it, but it does not guarantee the validity of the opinion. Many a belief held with the greatest emotional fervour has been hopelessly discredited by the progress of historical and scientific knowledge.

No one who takes a sympathetic view of human life will care to disparage the emotions, or wish to contend that a feeling which cannot be rationalised is thereby for ever discredited. An intuitive judgment on a human character may sometimes prove nearer the truth than a reasoned conclusion. But if the ideal of controversy is consistent thinking, feeling cannot be suffered to prejudice the issue. If you appeal to reason, then by reason you must be judged. Yet, according to Pascal, "the heart has its reasons which the reason knows nothing of"; and in a sense this is true of personal piety, which is never a matter of intellect merely. But when a man takes his stand on inner assurance, or a

conviction intime, he ought not to argue; for in strictness there is nothing to argue about. The individual who closes argument by an appeal to his heart would be more consistent if he declared that all controversy is absurd:

> "Ihr müsst mich nicht mit Widerspruch verwirren,
> Sobald man spricht, beginnt man schon zu irren."

One or two further aspects of the subject deserve to be considered. We may ask first whether controversy has not a useful function to fulfil in education. Is it not a process which may promote mental development? The actual results of argumentative discussion among those whose knowledge is limited and whose experience is small will not be impressive. Nevertheless it may be urged that the reflex effect of such discussion, in the shape of culture and growth of mind, is considerable. The Greeks, we noted, regarded practice in controversy as an important element in education. The labours of the Sophists, no doubt, were productive of a superficial rather than a real culture; yet the controversial method of Socrates, with its large aim and its inherent moral purpose, certainly helped to develop the mind of youth. Socrates invited his young friends to define the things which they assumed they knew, and by controverting each successive definition led them gradually to a deeper and more comprehensive view. In the *Theætetus*

Socrates claims to play the part of an intellectual midwife, and, as Plato saw him, he was the good genius who assisted at the mental travail of his youthful companions. And the controversial method he followed, in virtue of the negative element in it, served to liberate the mind from the fetters of prejudice, to induce clearness of conception, and to promote intellectual growth. The educational value of such a method lies in the fact that it recognises the important psychological truth, that mental culture is rooted in the principle of self-development. The mind should play a conscious part in educating itself: it cannot be made to grow by any purely external means. No doubt at its earliest stage teaching is largely the communication of knowledge which the child receives on the authority of others. Yet even on this humble level the child's mind must be stimulated through interest to exercise itself. At the stage when reflexion begins, however, the liberal use of the method of authoritative communication ceases to produce good results. For the mind is less in need of mere material to appropriate than of some independent exercise in the art of thinking; since the accumulation of information may only mean the oppression of the mind with an undigested mass of details which does not nourish the intellect. And yet 'cramming,' so widely condemned in theory, tends to linger on in practice. One must deny the

wisdom of that old system, once flourishing, and even now not wholly dead, under which a student laboriously wrote down in a note-book reports of class lectures, and at stated intervals rewrote them in the form of an examination paper. The value here attached to reproductive memory is too great: after all a man of culture must be a living voice and not a mere echo. Mental vigour and keenness will only come naturally and readily when the mind actively examines and discusses the subject set before it. The essential problem of education is to set the mind working on its own account under the lead of interest, since true education in the end implies self-education. And the controversial method at least offers one way, if not the only way, of promoting this object. Moreover, in effective teaching the minds of those taught ought to be made to disclose themselves in one form or another, otherwise the teacher works in the dark, and cannot judge the results he is producing. He may be bewildering instead of helping his pupils. To obviate this and to establish a living *rapport* between teacher and taught, there is the method of friendly discussion, promoted by the asking and answering of questions. The individual must be made to realise the defects of his knowledge and not simply be told that they exist. For undoubtedly the youthful mind is prone to grasp things in a partial and one-sided way, and is apt

to be all unconscious of the fallacy involved. The mode in which this should be corrected is not that of dogmatic assertion: the more excellent way is rather to induce the mind, through its own movement, to correct the abstractions into which it has fallen. There comes a time in the development of the mind when this can be effectively done through the give and take of friendly controversy. Debate, properly conducted, helps to reveal the defects in a man's thinking and to deliver him from the dogmatic slumber which envelops the ignorant: it has therefore a real value in culture. Many who look back on student days, and seek to weigh the gains and losses of that eventful time, recognise that the debating society supplied a need which class lectures failed to satisfy. It is true that the zeal of youthful controversy may be the zeal of mere partisanship, and the enthusiasms of youth seldom survive the experience of manhood. But in any case it is not the objective value of these discussions which is important: it is the mental training implied in the process itself which is the thing that matters. The effort to develop an argument which is self-consistent, and meets objections fairly, is an admirable exercise in the art of thinking clearly.

I daresay it will be said that practice in the art of controversy is not necessarily beneficial, and this is true. But I am here trying to bring out the

possible intellectual gain of argumentation when inspired by right motives and rightly conducted. A narrow devotion to controversy may merely develop cleverness and agility of mind without conducing to depth of insight or clearness of vision. An accomplished debater may none the less be a superficial man. Controversy must be leavened with a Socratic earnestness if it is to yield its better fruits. The danger is that a man may yield to the temptation to debate for victory rather than to reach the truth, in which case he may even consent to pervert the truth to gain his object. Many succumb to this temptation; and if their subtlety win a temporary triumph, it produces no permanent conviction. How often is this true of the controversial methods of the politician! He wants to defend some measure in the party programme at all hazards, and he casts about for means to do so. The problem for him is not so much the development of valid arguments as the power to persuade his audience and disarm hostile criticism. He adroitly chooses his arguments to suit the character of his audience, not disdaining to appeal to their prejudices or cupidity. Instead of meeting critics fairly he only makes a show of doing so, or perhaps evades the point at issue when that seems expedient. Plausibility thus comes to take precedence of truth, and we have the principles of the Sophists revived. Controversy waged in this spirit provokes

the hostility of the plain-spoken and honest man, and he becomes distrustful of the dialectician. Let us grant that this distrust is sometimes fully justified. But the admitted abuses of controversy ought not to blind us to its real uses. And that it has real uses I have tried to show.

In claiming a place for debate in education I may refer to the fact that Scottish people from of old have been distinguished for their zeal for education as well as by their love of controversy. And these two sides of the national character may not be entirely unconnected. The love of argument is naturally linked with a certain keenness of mind: it is only a hopelessly dull person who never argues, or who derives no enjoyment from listening to a strenuous debate. And the same shrewdness and activity of mind which gave Scotsmen a zeal for controversy have also led them to appreciate the value of a good education.

It seems likely that the extraordinarily observant mind of Shakespeare noted the proclivity for argument of the men of the Northern Kingdom. A good many Scotsmen had found their way to London even before King James's succession to the English throne, probably realising early that the high road to England is the finest prospect a Scotsman ever sees. At all events they were to be found in the metropolis, and so searching an eye

as that of the great dramatist could not fail to notice their foibles and peculiarities.

One may conjecture that if 'the wisest fool in Christendom' had not ascended the throne, Shakespeare might have been more liberal in his portraits of the Scot and his proclivities. In any case he has said enough in Henry v. Act iii. Sc. 2 to show that he understood. The valorous Scots captain, Capt. Jamy, according to the testimony of Capt. Fluellen, "will maintain his argument as well as any military man in the world in the discipline of the pristine wars of the Romans." And a little further on the redoubtable Jamy, after proclaiming his warlike resolution to the other two captains, ends with the characteristic remark: "Marry, I wad fain hear some *question* 'tween you tway." The last touch is shrewd and to the point.

Before I draw this essay to a close I must frankly admit that I have tried to see controversy on its best rather than its worst side. The give and take of argument is a means by which the candid mind strives to purge itself of prejudices and misconceptions and to gain a more consistent view of things. Those who play the game fairly learn to correct that onesidedness which is a heritage of the natural man, and acquire the art of thinking things together. We believe that after all there is truth in the thought of Plato, that controversy, or as he would call it dialectic, is a stage

in the development of mind as it endeavours to comprehend the many-sided world. Man has to prove things that he may hold fast that which is good. He will not, in a vision of the night, or by some genial intuition, see life steadily and see it whole.

But you will say, and perhaps not without justice, that this is too favourable a view of controversy. The familiar facts do not bear out the theory; and in actual experience controversies do not minister to the growth of knowledge in the way suggested. After a wealth of argument, opponents often remain unconvinced and obstinate in their old opinions. In which case is it not the better course to refuse to take a side? like the worthy landlord of the Rainbow Inn in *Silas Marner* who, when dispute grew keen among his customers, sought to soothe them with the sage remark: "You're both right and you're both wrong, as I say." This may be the way of peace: it is not the way to knowledge. And I would suggest that even though those who argue learn nothing, this does not prove the controversy has been futile. Those who followed the argument may have learned a good deal.

The question is no doubt important: Why is it that an argument so often fails to bring conviction either to an individual or to a party? How can we have faith in logic, it may be said, when its

practical results are so frequently inconclusive! In an earlier part of the paper I pointed out how the feelings, prejudices, and interests of the individual or of a society conspired to mar the consistency of an argumentation. But this is not the full explanation: the truth is deeper and more subtle. Disputes would be more easily decided if the question were merely one of drawing correct conclusions from given premises. But it is more than this. There is the problem of real agreement over the premises. Here the difficulty is that the premises may not mean the same, they may not have the same value, for different people. In reply it will be said that facts are gross and palpable, and there is no mistaking them. Here, however, lurks the fallacy. The facts from which people argue are not mere facts, brute facts if you like. On the contrary, they are objects into which varying meanings may be read and are read, and on which different valuations are set. The so-called facts of history are notoriously of this kind. In the *Life and Letters* of the late Edward Freeman this suggestive passage occurs: "I am beginning to think there is not, and never was, any such thing as the truth in the world. At least I don't believe that any two people ever gave exactly the same account of anything, even when they have seen it with their own eyes, except when they copy from one another." Freeman's conclusion is too

pessimistic, but one could illustrate the difficulty he has in mind over and over again. Take a single illustration. On December 10th, 1520, Luther burned the Pope's Bull at Wittenberg. Here is a fact outwardly simple, but with a wealth of possible meanings. How various the values it has for men of diverse religious beliefs! A Protestant and a Roman Catholic will never put the same interpretation on it. Now this is only a typical instance of a process which is constantly in evidence. Such differences of interpretation and valuation cause men to draw the most divergent conclusions from premises which are ostensibly the same. Hence differences in our feeling-life, altering as they do our valuation of things, cause differences in the inferences we make from these things. If we keep these truths in mind we shall better understand how many an old standing controversy is sometimes solved not by rigour of logic, but by a new situation which brings with it a change of feeling-tone. Beyond and behind the sphere of intellectual activity there is the wider and richer movement of life.

But when this has been granted, we can still hold that controversy, with the movement of mind which it represents, has a real and important office in the life of the individual and society. There is a danger in belittling the gift of reason. One recalls the saying of Goethe: "The deed is every-

thing, the word is nothing"; and the principle of action rather than argument is popular. *Solvitur ambulando.* But as against the mere glorification of will we urge the duty of trying to think clearly and consistently, of making our ideas reasonable and coherent so far as we can. And this is not easy, because men are prone to be one-sided and abstract, loose and unsystematic, in their thinking. For this weakness, controversy, waged in the right spirit, is a useful tonic. Discussion, keen but friendly, between several minds, exposes latent fallacies and brings to light aspects of the question at issue which in their private thinking had been neglected. To have done with argument because argument may be so ill conducted as to be futile, this is a counsel of despair. So long as man is a rational animal he will continue to argue. The moral is, not to ban controversy but to wage it fairly, so that the interplay of minds may minister to the growth of knowledge and promote the cause of truth.

VII

THEOLOGICAL DOCTRINES AND PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT[1]

IT is almost a truism to say that the present time is one of religious perplexity and unrest. The critical study of documents, and the enquiry into historical origins, which were so vigorously pursued during the greater part of last century, have undermined many traditional beliefs. Other beliefs they have placed for us in a fresh setting and under a new light, and so have materially altered their significance. Even the 'plain man' whom it is usual to invoke, the man without theological or philosophical culture, is more or less aware that the religious outlook is changing. He knows that often where aforetime men of knowledge walked with confidence they now move with hesitating and uncertain steps. Referring to this sense of perplexity in theological matters, Eucken has suggestively indicated its far-reaching character: "At the present day

[1] Originally appeared in the Quincentenary publications of St. Andrews University.

faith, which was to relieve man of all doubts, has itself become an object of doubt."[1] Another thinker, in a recent work, has put it on record that, in his view, "Nothing short of a complete revision of current theological ideas . . . can bring permanent satisfaction to our highly reflective age."[2] Meanwhile the embarrassing feature in the present situation is, that the constructive principles on which the work of revision is to be carried out are not clear and universally accepted. Consequently there is no general agreement on the nature and the amount of change which are necessary. Both in the social and the theological world the present discontent is much more patent than the new and better order which is to replace the existing system.

The sense of dissatisfaction with the theology of the Churches is experienced keenly by those who approach the study of Theology from the side of Philosophy. In Scotland this is the recognised method of procedure for those looking forward to the service of the Church. Since the Reformation our Scottish universities have included a regularly organised Faculty of Theology, while Philosophy has formed an important part of the Arts curriculum. And it may not be out of place to say here that the University of St. Andrews has had the privilege

[1] *The Life of the Spirit*, Eng. trans., 1909, p. 302.
[2] Watson, *The Philosophical Basis of Religion*, 1907 (Preface).

of possessing distinguished teachers in both departments. To mention only those who are no longer with us, one recalls the names of Ferrier, Tulloch, and Flint, men honourably distinguished in Scotland and beyond it for the work they have done. Yet I doubt not that the eminent teachers of the past were conscious of the difficulty whose pressure is now felt more acutely. The difficulty, put briefly, is this: philosophical teaching in our Scottish universities is now free and unhampered by test of any kind, while theological teaching is still fettered by a Confessional system which is no longer in harmony with the enlightened culture of this age. The intelligent student who has passed from the class of Metaphysics to that of Dogmatic Theology feels the change of attitude and method, and realises he is now pursuing a study under awkward limitations.

My object in this paper is to indicate the meaning and function of theological doctrines; then to consider how they come into contact with philosophical thinking, and to what extent they may be legitimately influenced by it. I will begin by viewing the problem from the standpoint of historical development.

All religion, to put it broadly, is an effort on man's part to link himself to an invisible Power or Powers, and thus to find satisfaction for his needs. The psychological condition of religion is human

weakness and incompleteness, which imply the constant recurrence of wants and desires for goods. As these needs evolve from the natural to the spiritual, so does the character of the religious relation undergo change. From the first religion is an expression of the whole man, and involves the presence of all the psychical elements: feeling, willing, and thinking. But at the early stages of religious development the cognitive elements remain very much in the background; at first they function only in instinctive beliefs, and afterwards in imaginative representations. Growth in culture, however, means growth in self-consciousness, and by way of myth and cosmogony man has passed to the conscious articulation of his religious beliefs in theological doctrines. Theology is not an accidental product: it has a determinate place and office in the logic of religious development. Every living religion which reaches a certain stage of growth will expand into doctrines, just as a tree arrives at a point when it puts forth branches. Theology is the answer to the demand of the developing religious consciousness for an explanation of the acts which are done in the cultus. Around the cultus, which is a relatively stable centre, doctrines gather, and embody the meaning man reads into his religious service. At a more advanced stage of social evolution, when religion interacts with science and philosophy, the task of

the theologian takes a wider scope and a deeper meaning. Theology broadens into a world-view resting on religious postulates, while its doctrines are systematised so as to express in a connected way the general meaning of religious experience.

In the present paper the writer has exclusively in view the theology of the Christian Church, for this is the only system of theology which has a vital interest for the Western mind. Christian doctrines had their source in those spiritual experiences which gathered round the life and the teaching of Jesus. They were primarily designed to set forth the cognitive aspect of these experiences, in other words, to express the convictions which were involved in Christian piety. But Christianity was from the first an expansive and missionary religion, and for practical purposes its content required to be stated in a communicable and generally intelligible form. So doctrines were framed to be the objective expression of the faith of the Christian Society and the embodiment of its value-judgments. The rise and spread of heresies impelled the Church of the first four centuries to articulate with growing fulness a system of dogma for which the claim of authority and catholicity was made. *Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus credendum est* became the note of Catholic doctrine. The intellectual aspect

of faith was more and more accentuated, and the inner side of faith-experience was relatively neglected in consequence. The logical outcome of this tendency was seen in the mediæval Church's conception of dogma as forming an absolutely authoritative system, which thought might interpret and explain, but must by no means alter or discard. The motto of Scholastic Theology was *fides quærens intellectum*, but the intellect was denied the right of questioning or criticising the content of faith. This dualism between the form and the matter of thought made fruitful interaction impossible, and the later schoolmen were provoked to find a way out of this *impasse* by throwing out the theory of the 'double truth.' In fact, the whole Scholastic system had become so formal and artificial that it was doomed to fade before the light of fresh experience and knowledge. The Reformation signalised the deliverance of philosophy from bondage to the dogmas of the Church, and, at the same time, it recalled men's minds to the truth that religious doctrines must stand in some vital relation to Christian experience. Faith, for instance, with Luther is no longer an act of assent to the Church's creed; it is an inward and a soul-renewing experience. And while it is true to say that the Reformers did not break with the principle of authority, but transferred the centre of authority from the Church to Scripture, it is also

important to remember that they no longer claimed the old infallibility for religious doctrines. To them dogma was only a conditionally valid expression of the Church's knowledge of truth, and it was not exempted from correction and modification.[1] At the same time it is impossible to deny that the theology of the Reformed Churches was based on views of Scripture and its interpretation which, in the light of modern knowledge, it has become difficult to defend. And one has to admit that modern liberal theologians, under pressure from the scientific and philosophical culture of the age, would recast the Reformed Confessions in ways to which the Reformers themselves would never have consented. But if the situation is a perplexing one for the Reformed Churches, it is still more difficult for the Church of Rome. The claim of absolute truth made for the creed of that Church can only be upheld at the cost of ignoring the best fruits of modern scientific and philosophic thought. And though the Roman Catholic Church has a theory of development, the theory is not of a kind which admits of a vital relation between

[1] So in the Formula of Concord: *Symbola non obtinent auctoritatem judicis, hæc enim dignitas solis sacris literis debetur.* And Luther, in connexion with the Articles of Visitation, says: *Wiewohl wir Solches nicht als strenge Gebote können lassen ausgehen, auf dass wir nicht neue päpstliche Dekretalen aufwerfen, sondern als eine Historie, dazu als ein Zeugniss und Bekentniss unseres Glaubens.*

religious doctrines and the growing culture of the time. For development in this case is not organic: it does not allow of inward transformation. The Roman theory is technically known as 'preformation.' In the unalterable 'deposit of faith'—to use the phrase of Newman—which was entrusted to the Church at the beginning, all the features of the later growth were 'preformed'; and future progress could only be on the lines of further definition and explication of what was contained in the original matter. Under these stereotyped conditions a real reconstruction of ecclesiastical dogmas, such as would bring them into harmony with modern knowledge, is impossible. During recent years this truth has received striking recognition within the Roman Catholic Church, and it has produced the important movement termed Modernism. The demand of Modernism, as expressed by its prophets, is for a living instead of an artificial conception of development. To quote the late Father Tyrrell: "A bold contention that all ecclesiastical development is simply a mechanical unpacking of what was given in a tight parcel 2000 years ago"! In contrast to this he pleads for Modernism as "An expression of an opposite contention, of a belief in time, in growth, in vital and creative evolution." The proclamation of this principle coming from within a Church whose motto is *semper eadem*, is significant indeed.

The problem which presses in different degrees on Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians, is that of harmonising the world-view expressed in the ecclesiastical creeds with that which is the common property of modern cultivated minds. The trouble largely arises from the fact that religious doctrines have grown up in a pre-scientific age, and under the influence of philosophical conceptions which have lost their old authority. The doctrines themselves, nevertheless, have an authority derived from tradition and sentiment, and this makes it difficult to mould them freely to suit the needs of the time. So far as religion is matter of pious feeling, of practical life based on trust in a Higher Power, it may be fairly urged that it does not come into conflict with scientific thinking. But in so far as theology sets forth doctrines about the creation of the world, the origin of man, and miraculous interferences with the natural order, and in so far as it inculcates a particular theory concerning the composition of historical documents, it occupies ground where it is open to challenge from science. It is just on these points that there has been keen dispute—dispute growing out of the fact that either side has made demands which the other has refused to concede. If we look, however, beyond the immediate points at issue to the motives which are at work, we can see that the strife is the outcome of two sharply contrasted

tendencies. Science is bent on establishing everywhere the presence of order and necessary connexion within the experienced world: religion is primarily concerned with a transcendent and spiritual world by reference to which it appreciates the facts of the natural world. Differing methods and diverging purposes have led to misunderstanding. So it has seemed that the antagonism between the scientific and the theological points of view might be obviated by a proper delimitation of spheres. On the one side, let science keep to its own work, and forbear to question the reality of those spiritual experiences of which dogma is the intellectual expression: on the other side, let theology pursue its spiritual task and cease to advance doctrines which are inconsistent with the scientific knowledge of the time. Since the days of Kant this way of reconciling the claims of religious doctrine and scientific knowledge has commended itself to many, and in appearance it seems to do justice to the rights of both. But a closer inspection discloses difficulties. The rigid separation of the two spheres is not possible, for religion demands, and cannot help demanding, that even the facts of the natural world be construed from a spiritual and teleological standpoint. Natural science, again, when it strictly insists that the principles of mechanical connexion and casual explanation are sufficient, leaves no room for the

teleological interpretation of nature which religion postulates. Concord is not to be expected under the circumstances. The mind desiring to find its own unity in the experienced world is urged beyond the departmental solution towards a coherent world-view in which both science and religion have a place. In fact, the attempt to delimit two spheres involves a movement of the mind beyond them to a comprehensive standpoint. The synoptic mind, the mind which thinks things together, must in some sense pass beyond the spheres which it endeavours to distinguish and relate. Such a point of view is that of the ultimate science, or philosophy, which seeks to organise all the elements of human experience into a coherent and consistent whole. And since religion claims to give a view of the world as a totality, it is inevitable that its doctrines should come into intimate relation with philosophy, which exercises the same comprehensive outlook. Except in some special cases where theology has transgressed into the domain of science, the differences between them cannot be settled from a purely scientific standpoint. The final adjustment must be between theology and philosophy, where the relationship is more intimate and far-reaching.

What, then, is the kind of relation which should subsist between theology and philosophy? During last century two interesting and influential efforts

were made to settle this question. These efforts were associated with the work of Hegel and of Ritschl, and in spirit and issues they were strongly contrasted. It will prepare the way for a fresh discussion of the problem if I examine briefly the Hegelian and Ritschlian solutions.

The assumption which underlay the Hegelian system was, that speculative thought was able to grasp the organic unity of things, and to exhibit all stages of experience as moments in the development of the Idea. There went with this assumption the claim that philosophic thinking, in the light of its supreme principle, could critically appreciate and determine the degree of truth in the different phases of experience. Religious doctrines, regarded as the expression of spiritual experience, when tested by this speculative theory, were found to contain the truth only in the form of figurative thinking or imaginative representation (*Vorstellung*). Hence they required to be critically purified ere they could be raised to the form of philosophic truth (*Begriff*). Much of the German speculative theology in the middle of last century was governed by this principle, and in the work of men like Vatke and his disciple Biedermann it bore interesting fruit. The defects of the method flowed from its initial assumption, that thought could rise to an absolute point of view and evaluate all experience by a single Supreme Principle.

Hegelian theologians tended to ignore the question of what experience lay behind Christian doctrines: they often arbitrarily transformed doctrines in order to raise them to the level of philosophic thought, and they did not sufficiently consider whether spiritual values were not lost in the process of transformation. Still, the dangers inherent in this method should not blind us to the element of truth which it contained. It is quite correct that there is a blending of imagination and thought in the theology of the Churches. Figures and analogies are used which a little reflexion shows cannot be strictly and literally true, although they are useful and even legitimate for practical purposes. For example, theological doctrine represents the Supreme Spirit as a Father, construes the Atonement in terms of forensic law, and depicts the final apportionment of rewards and punishments under the image of a Day of Judgment. It must, I think, be granted that such images cannot be literally and exactly true: and we may recognise this, while at the same time we confess that it is not possible for us to formulate the thought-content of such dogmas in a precise and logical form. Moreover, in a practical regard, it is easy to see that a figure or an analogy may be the best centre and support of religious emotion and sentiment. Many to whom the image appeals would find no help in the pure thought. The element

of right in the theory before us may, I believe, be put thus. Philosophy, the attempt to think out coherently the meaning of the world, enables us to see the defects of partial and figurative statements in theology and elsewhere; and this may hold good even when we are not able to translate a dogma into a philosophic truth. Philosophy, where it cannot teach us how to reconstruct a dogma, may teach us to use it as a symbol; and in future the symbolic aspect of religious doctrines is likely to receive fuller recognition. A frank acceptance of the principle of symbolism, when exact dogmatic formulation is impossible, would at least diminish the discord between some of the dogmas of the Churches and philosophical thought: it would make possible a better working relation between theology and philosophy. At all events this may be expected, provided that philosophy will recognise that symbols may be legitimate in their own sphere and have an objective reference. But if you treat the symbol as merely the figurative expression of a faith-state whose value is purely subjective, you do injustice to the truth-claim put forward by the religious consciousness. Lotze has some suggestive remarks on the symbolical use of dogma. "Religious truth is valid for all alike. On the contrary, the theoretical expressions which are found for it are all of them inadequate. And just for this reason it is legitimate to agree on a

mode of formulation to which each one may give the theoretical interpretation by which he thinks he can best grasp the inmost meaning." A few lines further on he adds: "It is not the concern of religion to find a theoretical expression free from objection for what is transcendent. The point rather is that we have figurative expressions to which the mind can attach the same feelings as are due to the real content."[1]

The influence of the great movement of speculative thought which culminated in Hegel gradually exhausted itself in Germany. The free handling of religious doctrines in order to elevate them to the philosophic form naturally provoked a reaction. The cry arose for a return from the shadowy realm of speculative concepts to the facts of experience and history. The most noteworthy and influential exponent of this reaction in the domain of theology was Albrecht Ritschl. The Ritschlian theology is historical and experimental, and is definitely opposed to the intrusion of metaphysics into the sphere of religion. The historical Christian consciousness, it is urged, is an independent fact which rests on the revelation of God in Christ, and carries its own witness in itself. If we interrogate that consciousness, we find that the beliefs which it involves are essentially judgments of

[1] *Grundzüge der Religionsphilosophie*, p. 91.

value. That Christ is the Son of God, for instance, is not to be taken in the sense of an eternal and metaphysical relationship, but as an expression of the worth of Christ for the souls of Christian people. Hence Ritschl would purge religious doctrines of those metaphysical ideas, which originally found their way into the creeds of the ancient Church through the influence of Greek philosophy. Christian theology must be cleansed from such alien elements, and become the embodiment of those living values which are at the root of Christian faith and life. This anti-metaphysical attitude is illustrated by the remark of a prominent disciple of the Ritschlian school (Herrmann): "The Metaphysics which seeks to cognise the common ground of the ethical and natural world is not only immoral but irreligious."[1] And this hostility to metaphysics is a note of the Ritschlian School as a whole.

The Ritschlian theology has substantial merits, although at many points it differs decidedly from the traditional theology. Into its merits or demerits, however, it is not my purpose to enter just now. I shall confine myself to asking how far the Ritschlian denial of the right of philosophical thought to influence religious

[1] Ritschl's own attitude was hardly so extreme. He was in the end inclined to admit that theoretical thought might at least attempt the solution of the problem in question, provided it set out from the Christian idea of God as scientifically valid.

doctrines is the solution of the problem of this paper.[1]

It is evident, at the outset, that the Ritschlian theory involves a drastic separation of spheres within experience which raises serious difficulties. The scientific sphere, where strict causal explanations and mechanical connexions rule, is opposed to a sphere of freedom ruled by teleological ideas and spiritual values. I have already referred to the objections which may be urged against this arbitrary division of the harmonious kingdom of human experience into rival States governed by diverse laws. The perplexing point is how things cleft asunder in theory can work together in practice. Judgments of value are set against judgments of fact, and how they come to be connected and unified is not apparent. For they blend in experience, and what is fact in one aspect, in another aspect is value. Are we to suppose, then, that the world of mechanically related things stands over against a world of spiritual ends and values, and that any speculative solution of the difference is impossible? If spiritual ends are

[1] The affinity of Pragmatism, with its theory that truths are values, to Ritschlianism has been frequently noted. But I have not deemed it necessary to say anything about Pragmatism at this point; for Pragmatism is not in itself anti-metaphysical, though it rejects an Absolutist metaphysics. Nor have I referred to Eucken's Activism; for, so far as I can see, Eucken would not quarrel with the theory that speculative thought must translate theological doctrines into a philosophical form.

realised in the natural world, and if the natural world subserves the achievement of spiritual ends, surely the attempt to think out the implications of the fact is not a forbidden quest but a reasonable obligation. In the long run the contrast can only be relative, for it is the same human spirit which is active in the fields of science and in the domains of moral action and religious service; and what falls within the unity of the mind cannot be parted in the nature of things. If the theologian persists in the rigid separation of the two provinces, he may be driven to admit that religion is justified in postulating what science is within its rights in rejecting. Miracle, it might be said, ought to be postulated from the point of view of religious value, but denied from the point of view of causal connection. Such dilemmas can only be met by a philosophy which seeks a ground and principle of coherence between the natural and spiritual realms.

There is undoubtedly a difference between the religious and the philosophical standpoints, but Ritschlianism has exaggerated this difference into an antagonism. In religion it is the personal interest which is dominant, while in philosophy it is the theoretical interest which prevails. The former develops its world-view mainly in response to emotional and practical needs. The latter is chiefly prompted by the desire to know and under-

stand; though it is well also to keep in mind that the personal interest is present in speculative thinking, and the theoretical interest is not absent from the religious attitude. In both cases we have a world-view, though seen from different standpoints: in the one instance the standpoint of rationality, in the other that of value. For theological doctrines, it may be remembered, are the expressions of historic values. They set forth the truths men of the past reckoned of most worth, the truths which it seemed to them gave meaning to their lives; and those who accept them now claim that they fulfil the same function in their experience. Now in trying to justify our conviction that speculative reflexion ought to influence religious doctrines, I think our object will be furthered by examining the conception of value, and that especially in its relation to fact and to truth. If it turns out that it is impossible to treat value in abstraction from these other notions, the result will greatly strengthen our theory that religious values must be brought into coherent relations with philosophical thought. The main principle of the Ritschlian theology will be shown to be defective.

The value-judgments of Ethics and of Religion, it need hardly be said, are not arbitrary products: they have grown gradually out of the historic life. The evolution of spiritual values has proceeded

pari passu with that evolution of spiritual needs which marks the development of persons interacting within a social system. Every judgment of value, however, must have its ground; and this ground is psychical, that is to say, a state of the individual consciousness. Value-judgments, in other words, refer back to value-feelings as their psychological source and condition. We cannot merge value in the act of valuing, for there must first be something to valuate. At the same time a value-feeling can only develop into clear consciousness, and receive general statement, when it is explicated in the judgment: value-feelings must specify themselves in the judgment ere they can become working-values and function as ends for human wills. A value-feeling when thus defined becomes *eo ipso* an object of desire, for in its very nature it is a desirable state of consciousness. What on a lower level was mere conative tendency towards satisfying experiences, for the developed consciousness becomes an act of will which has for its object an idea of value represented as an end. In the psychological order of progress the end becomes an end for the will because it was first recognised as a value; the psychological process is unintelligible on the opposite hypothesis.[1] As the social order evolves human ends

[1] A point which has been emphasised by Höffding. *Vide* his *Religionsphilosophie*, p. 11.

become varied, and the necessity arises for introducing some sort of order and system into them, so that individual purposes may be made consistent and the social life harmonious. This can only be accomplished by some method of graduating values, and graduation in turn implies a general standard of value which can be applied to different ends. The standard must be an end or value conceived as ultimate, a standard by reference to which all lesser ends can be evaluated and systematisation can ensue. As a step to the Supreme End every other end becomes a means, while the lesser ends in turn have means which promote their attainment. The system thus takes form as a graduated whole of ends and means, of direct and indirect, or instrumental, values—a system which gives meaning and interest to human life. It is within such a developing system that ethical laws, or norms of the will, are gradually defined and receive social recognition. They are not *a priori* principles, unconditionally valid, as Kant imagined, but generalised rules for the will, and their function is to guide men towards the end. They share the plastic character of the growing organism of society, and instead of determining the end they are determined by it. From value to end, and from end to norm, this seems to be the psychological order of progress.

At this point a question arises which demands careful consideration. Does the whole meaning of value-feelings and value-judgments lie in the fact that they are states or acts of consciousness? To put it in a slightly different form, do all the implications of value fall within valuing subjects? Certainly when we speak of the evolution of ethical or spiritual values, we can only find the active centre and source of that process in the developing consciousness of persons. Yet it seems impossible to hold that the whole content of our ideas of value can be derived from the side of the subject. We constantly speak of facts or things, conceived as independent of us, possessing value. Especially in the case of indirect or instrumental values, we refer to them as objects embodying values which we do not make, but discover and turn to profit. No doubt closer analysis shows this is not strictly correct, for the value of the means certainly depends on the purpose we have in view, and what has high worth for one person may be useless in the hands of another. Yet the subject cannot arbitrarily confer a value on any object whatsoever. Not every fact can be a means; the intrinsic character counts also. The value of a picture lies in the æsthetic feeling it can evoke in the spectator. But this feeling does not depend merely on the presence of the artistic temperament in the observer: it

depends also on something in the picture which the mind finds and which it does not create. German writers usually designate those objects which have power to elicit value-judgments, *goods*, and distinguish the doctrine of *goods* from the doctrine of *values*. The distinction corresponds to the two aspects of value, according as we see it from the subjective or from the objective side. The need of the distinction is brought home to us by the breakdown of every serious endeavour to make clear how the manifold content of our value-judgments can spring from conditions within the valuing subject. The reference to the subject is essential, we have already granted; but the subject, as a centre of value, only develops through interaction with a world of objects. It has been truly remarked that value-feelings and value-judgments could not arise apart from the stimulus of objectively given facts.[1] The world of goods, therefore, contained in any developed social system is the outcome of interaction between man and his environment, and expresses that aspect of facts in virtue of which they function as values for human wills. The system of goods thus grows out of the commerce of subjects with objects, and points to some intrinsic relation between the realm of values and the realm of existences. This relation is not reducible to a strict identity; for, if facts are

[1] Wundt, *Einleitung in die Philosophie*, p. 35.

values, the fact is not exhausted by its value-aspect. In the last resort the development of spiritual ends or values must be conditioned by the principles and potencies of that larger world of reality within which they develop and to which they refer.

The conclusion reached in this branch of our enquiry would seem to be, that we can, up to a point, work satisfactorily with the conception of value in Ethics or Theology. We do so by treating as irrelevant to our purpose the deeper issues raised by our use of the category. Ethics in its normative function may draw out the rules of conduct which conduce to the realisation of the Good: Theology likewise can elaborate doctrines whose aim is to define the way which the religious spirit must traverse to attain the higher values. But in either case it is necessary to make postulates which are demands on the real world, and the validity of these demands requires to be explained and defended. For if you claim that Reality is such that it coheres with and responds to the claims of value, you are surely bound to try to justify the claim. And this is only possible by passing to the higher standpoint of philosophy and striving to think out the connexion of the worlds of fact and value. I shall not attempt now to discuss the lines on which such an enterprise should proceed. But it is not going too far to say

that an important use must be made of the teleological idea. Valuing subjects and valued objects must be inwardly adapted the one to the other—they must be brought into an organic relation by an end immanent in both. The organised value-judgments of human society are not possible save on the assumption of systematic coherence between the elements out of which they are developed. The universe must be an orderly and coherent whole in order that this development should take place within it. In an earlier part of this paper I pointed out that the category of end was psychologically posterior to that of value. But what is *ὕστερον γενέσει* may be *πρότερον φύσει*, and this appears to be true in the case of the category of end. For the psychological working of the notion of value presupposes that the contents of inner and outer experience are co-ordinated and connected by some teleological principle. The psychological process from values to ends is the order of genesis: in the order of reality the idea of end is involved in the inner connexion of facts and values. The ultimate Ground or Source of things, one would say, must be teleological in its activity. Plainly, therefore, the speculative enquiry into the nature and working of this Ground has an intimate bearing on the spiritual values, and on the doctrines in which they have received historic expression.

It will make our position still clearer if we examine with some care the closely connected problem of the relation of truth to value. Both conceptions are of the first importance in the working of religion, and it is a normal feature of the religious mind that it postulates, not only value, but truth for its doctrines. Here again it is possible to say that, just as facts are values, truths are values; and there is a sense in which both statements are correct. It is the case that fact and truth alike have a value aspect, but fact, we saw already, could not be merged in value; and it is the same with truth. But, it may be replied, though faith lays claim to knowledge, though it expresses the conviction that religious doctrines are true, in so doing it does not mean to assert more than that these doctrines have proved practically valuable to religious people. And observe, it will be urged, in putting forward this contention we are not affirming that truth is a purely subjective and individual satisfaction. To validate its claim to truth a proposition has to show itself a normal working-value, and to justify itself before the larger tribunal of historical and social experience. Now there are cases where this argument is not without force, as I will try to explain later. But, when all is said, there is something more in the faith-attitude than seems to be recognised here. Faith has its cognitive aspect, and like

every cognitive act it contains a reference to a reality beyond what is given in the act of judging. In claiming truth for a religious belief, we affirm something more than that the consequences of believing it are and have been practically valuable. This something more appears to be the fact that our belief harmonises with an independent order or structure of reality,—a reality which enters into human consciousness and is in turn affected by it, but which has also a nature of its own. This reference to reality is clearly an implication of religious belief in God, for instance. We say that such a belief is true, not primarily because it works, though this may be valuable as a confirmation, but because our belief refers to a real Being related to us and yet possessing an existence beyond us. The validity of this transsubjective reference is essential to faith: once persuade men that the truth of their religious convictions is nothing more than the reactionary effects of these on their lives, and their faith would wither away.

Do you then, it may be asked, entirely reject the pragmatic conception of truth, and deny it any religious significance? By no means. Working-value is a test of truth, not, however, the sole test, not the exclusive test. The pragmatic theory that truths are values, validated by working, is often an important ground of religious assurance,

and sometimes it may not be possible to assign any other ground. Take, for instance, the Christian belief, that the spirit of God works in man's working while he strives to do the divine will. It is hardly possible to hold that this claim to truth could be verified by us in any other way than that of spiritual experience and practical results. Any form of 'rational proof' would fall far short of yielding a conclusion of the kind; and the individual who has the verification given in life-experience neither asks nor desires any such 'proof.'[1] And it cannot be doubted that, in an age when the older apologetic methods are losing their force, the pragmatic theory of working-value is destined to prove a genuine support to religious beliefs which are really vital. The pragmatic test selects and sets in relief those theological doctrines which are central—which have an intimate bearing on religious life. On the whole we may frankly admit that the writings of James and Schiller have done good service in calling attention to the humanistic aspect of truth, and in challenging the old notion of transcendent truths, existing somewhere in the beyond, and waiting to be recognised. Truth cannot be treated in abstraction from error, and it does not exist as such outside the form of

[1] Compare with this the thought of Augustine: *Noli foras ire, in te ipsum redi; in interiore homine habitat veritas* (*De Vera Religione*).

judgment. Nevertheless it is not likely that either philosophy or religion will, in the long run, agree that in translating truths into values we thereby exhaust the implications of truth; and the principle of working-value is made effective by the fact that we qualify value by a reference to conditions beyond itself which are implied in the term 'working.' The process of selecting truths from truth-claims by applying the test of working-value cannot depend merely on the subject that verifies; it must also depend on the real context or system within which the value works. For that system goes to test the working. It is just in dealing with this objective reference that the exponents of Pragmatism are least satisfying. Dr. Schiller, for example, says: "The pragmatic theory of knowledge does not start with any antithesis of 'truth' and 'fact' but conceives of reality as something which, for our knowledge at least, grows up in the making of truth." He adds: "Initial reality would be *sheer potentiality*, the mere ὕλη of what was destined to develop into true reality."[1] The objection to this view is that, if the ὕλη is to have a meaning and function, it must possess a nature of its own and will only accept postulates of the subject which harmonise with that nature. If you deny it a nature it becomes a nonentity, and you are committed to the impossible task of showing

[1] *Studies in Humanism*, pp. 425 and 433.

how the mind builds up the fabric of knowledge out of nothing.

The point for which we are contending is recognised in the theory of truth as *correspondence.* But that theory suffers from a twofold defect. On the one hand, it is not universally applicable, and, on the other hand, when it is applicable it is often stated in a way which can easily be refuted. In regard to the first point, there is a multitude of scientific and historical judgments where the notion of 'corresponding' to something is unworkable. If I say "The ultimate constituents of matter are electrons," or "Tell is a mythical personage," the only way to test either assertion is to show that it fits into a coherent body of judgments which we are in some sense able to verify. Neither proposition admits of being tested by a simple reference to a 'corresponding' fact. Even in the case of perceptive judgments the correspondence theory needs restatement if it is not to collapse under criticism. Thus, if you say that a judgment is true when an idea in the mind corresponds to an object which is independently given, the answer at once follows that, since the mind verifies the correspondence, both object and idea must be embraced and sustained by the activity of the mind. The distinction of corresponding elements falls within consciousness: it cannot be distinction between consciousness and

an extra-mental reality. The object given in presentation is an ideal construction, and is not able to function as an independent norm. It is only possible to indicate very briefly here how this difficulty may be met. In judgments of this kind the test is not so much correspondence as adequacy of interpretation. In the object as mental content there is a reference to a reality which is transsubjective, the interaction of which with the subject is a condition of presented objects.[1] But presented objects may exist for consciousness with very different degrees of fulness, varying from mere awareness (*δυνάμει*) to developed interpretation (*ἐνεργείᾳ*); and in the transition from the one to the other lies the possibility of error. The tendency of mental belief, as Dr. Stout has pointed out, is to outrun the knowledge of the data, and so it may draw conclusions which will not harmonise with the facts when they are fully known.[2] I see a man coming towards me and I pronounce him to be Smith: on nearer approach I recognise him to be Brown. Had I simply said in the first instance, "That is a man," my judgment would have been true. But my judgment outran the data cognised,

[1] Meinong's *Ueber Annahmen* (ed. i.), p. 125 ff., contains suggestive remarks on the subject. A clear distinction is there drawn between *Gegenstand* and *Inhalt*.

[2] *Mind*, N.S. xvii. p. 23. In various ways I have profited from Dr. Stout's remarks.

and when these were explicitly presented I corrected my error. But in all cases of perceptive judgments the test of truth involves something more than the mental content and its arrangement. Whether a judgment is true or no depends on how far that content is an adequate and harmonious expression of the nature of a reality which is for itself as well as for the cognising subject. Such a test might be termed one of working-value, provided the implications of the term 'working' are duly acknowledged.

The idea of truth as internal coherence is valuable in complementing and supporting what, for convenience, may be termed the 'correspondence' notion. It will not work as an absolute and exclusive test just because reality is not exhausted by a coherent system of judgments. If *per impossibile* this were achieved, the conception of truth would have disappeared; for the very judgment that the absolute system was true would imply a reference of the system beyond itself. If, however, we do not urge the notion of coherence in this all-embracing sense, but treat it as signifying the development of a connected whole of judgments, starting from experienced data and if possible returning to them again, we fully admit the importance of such a method of proof. It affords a more comprehensive test of validity, and the support which each element has to give the

others within the system makes the process of detecting error more sure and searching. The limitation of the method lies in the difficulty of being certain that all the elements which are necessary to make the construction adequate to reality have been taken into account. Hence the importance of being able to show the system is verified by facts of experience which are immediately certain, or by preceptive judgments. The elaborate mathematical construction which deduced the existence of the planet Neptune from certain disturbances in the orbit of Uranus, and determined the position of the disturbing body, received an invaluable confirmation when Neptune was found by the telescope in the place indicated by Adams and Leverrier. The first astronomical calculations of the times of the eclipses of Jupiter's satellites were found to differ in varying degrees from the observed times. A fact had been ignored, because it was then unknown—the time light takes to travel. These illustrations prove how valuable it is for a connected system of judgments to come back on some point of the experienced world for verification. Or take the case of a historical judgment such as 'Cæsar crossed the Rubicon.' We test the truth of the proposition by showing that it fits into a coherent whole of historical judgments. But the system of judgments which relate to the Roman Empire and

its destinies has a connexion with the existing world which requires the Roman Empire to explain it. Even in this instance coherence has a point of support in the experienced world. But coherence by itself can never be an absolute test of truth, for internal completeness of system is not attainable. Any system of judgments we can think out will fall within the larger whole of reality; and to that larger whole it can never be fully adequate.

The result of the foregoing discussion may be thus summarised. The notions of truth and value alike contain a reference to a real order or system which the experient subject does not make. In the case of value this objective reference is implied in the idea of 'goods,' which represent facts as qualified by the valuations of the subject. But this qualification, of course, presupposes an intrinsic character in the thing qualified. Truth, again, exists in the form of judgment; if you go below or above that form the term 'true' ceases to have a meaning. The constant implication of truth is reference to a reality which the subject who judges accepts but does not create. The idea of truth signifies a harmonious and adequate relation of the content of ideas to transsubjective reality on the one side, and to the thinking and willing subject on the other. There cannot be a single and exclusive test of truth: different methods of

verification must, so far as possible, be made to supplement and support one another.

If the foregoing line of thought is sound, certain conclusions follow which are of importance to our main subject. Theological doctrines, we have seen, claim to express values and to set forth truths. And in view of what has been said we think it impossible to treat these conceptions as terms which merely denote subjective satisfactions. In laying claim to truth we make a demand on reality, and in positing values to be realised we postulate that the nature of the real world is such that it admits of this realisation. For many religious people the assurance that these demands are met is, and will remain, a matter of faith; and if the rights of faith are questioned they fall back on authority. The theologian, too, is often anxious to shun commerce with philosophy on the plea that his dogmas represent truths and values historically guaranteed. But the inherent difficulties and limitations of the purely historical method are very apparent to thoughtful minds: sooner or later they are urged to test by reflective thinking the postulates of religion. This means that we endeavour to bring the world-view which our religious doctrines express into harmonious relation with that deeper and more comprehensive thinking of experience we name philosophy. Philosophy stands for a more complete solution of the world-

problem than the solution given by religion. For its aim is synoptic, and its task is to think out coherently the meaning of experience as a whole. The religious mind reaches its conception of the world by following out the implications of religious experience. For philosophy the development of the religious consciousness is a highly suggestive and important fact; nevertheless it is only one aspect of experience. There are other aspects that fall to be considered, and it is the business of philosophy from the first to think things together. Subject and object, thought and being, value and fact, these are the contrasted elements of reality whose inner connexion speculative thought seeks to explain by referring them to an ultimate Ground or unifying Principle. The aim of philosophy is system: it strives to show that experience is coherent throughout and satisfies the mind's desire for unity. While the world-view of religion is primarily the expression of faith, that of philosophy is developed by the exercise of reason or synthetic thinking. Hence the ideal of philosophy is systematic order — the rational articulation of elements within a whole; and it cannot agree to treat anything as arbitrary or accidental. In a sense philosophy is only carrying out the principle of scientific explanation at a higher level and with a more comprehensive purpose. For the partial synthesis of science it tries to substitute a complete

synthesis, in which each element has a determinate place and function in the organised totality. Were this purpose realised, a theological doctrine would have precisely that degree of validity which philosophy assigned to it: in a word, the truth of theology would be philosophy. It is abundantly clear, however, that no complete realisation of the ideal is possible. For one thing the process of experience itself whose meaning we try to read is an unfinished process. And we survey the movement from a point within it: we cannot climb some mount of vision apart and see all reality *sub specie æternitatis*. Moreover, the philosophic thinker is constrained to accept immediate data of experience as his starting-point, and he can never so carry out his work of construction as to come back on his data and give them their place and meaning in the fully articulated whole. The work of rationalisation is incomplete, and it can never be completed. The development of reason is an aspect of the development of the historic life; and, so long as the historic process continues, it will continue to set new problems to thought, and the task of reason will be unfinished. It is possible to go a step further, and to point out that the conception of rationality, taken by itself, is an abstraction which will not work. Reason always presupposes that there is something to rationalise, and its exercise is stimulated by the presence of

materials calling for explanation. The reasoning process goes back to data which are the object of immediate conviction or faith, and however far we carry the work of rationalisation, we always leave off with unrationalised elements on our hands. This non-rational residuum will not vanish, for experience is richer than thought, and thinking as judgment always refers beyond itself. Reason, in the personal life, is constantly qualified by the presence of conationand feeling; nor is it possible to reduce conation and feeling to reason, although there is no inherent contradiction between them. Rationality, we hold therefore, will ever signify an unfinished process for us—a process which represents in its outcome our most connected, consistent and harmonious reading of our experience. Philosophy is thus partial in its achievement, and the ripest philosophy of an age is the measure of its insight into the meaning of the world. The toil of trying to think things together goes on because it is a permanent need of our nature: the mind is driven to seek the counterpart of its own unity in the world, and incoherency is a challenge to thought. Philosophy, though it never comes to its goal, is a salutary corrective to the departmental spirit, and it helps to free us from the tyranny of abstractions.

We have now come in view of a question of cardinal importance for our present enquiry.

Granted that the aim, scope and outcome of philosophy are such as here described, with what justice can philosophical thought influence theological doctrines? Is its outlook wide enough, its insight deep enough, to constitute a claim to be heard which the theologian ought not to disregard? In order to answer this question let us ask how far the speculative thinker can cast light on those questions which, we have seen, are admittedly raised by the theologian without being solved. Broadly regarded, the questions referred to are concerned with the relation of the ideal to the real aspect of experience. Spiritual values, as we have seen, are somehow connected with the world of facts through the idea of goods. And there is the claim of religious faith that the values of the personal life are true and harmonise with reality, and that spiritual ends are realised in the real world. The point at issue is not whether philosophical thinking can rationally solve the body of problems here involved: in our view no claim of the sort can be made good by philosophy. But the point is whether philosophy, in the form of metaphysics, is able to deal with these problems in a helpful way, and to carry them forward on the road towards a settlement. If it can do so, as we think it can, then, as the expression of man's rational activity, its results should be harmonised with the expression of man's

religious faith: for faith and reason, however contrasted, are the reactions of the one human nature upon experience, and cannot be diametrically opposed.

When we survey the results of metaphysical thought, we find, of course, that it only gives a partial solution of these problems. The philosopher cannot rise to a First Principle of things, and then show deductively how this Principle comes to differentiate itself in the kingdoms of nature and of spirit. He must begin with experience, which is a continuous process of development, and try to make clear by reflexion what is implied in its gradual differentiation into subjective and objective aspects. The speculative thinker, in our view, finds that the experienced world, the world given in presentation, rests on the interaction of individual selves or centres of experience with a system of independent not-selves; and in this interaction the nature of both factors is manifested. In thinking out the meaning of this interaction, he has to consider whether the contrasts of ideal and real, of value and fact, are not distinctions which fall within the developing system of spiritual beings and represent modes of their interaction. The question then follows: How are we to conceive the source or ground of this interacting system of spiritual factors which includes within it self-conscious and

spiritual persons? The conclusions bear vitally on religion, for the Ultimate Reality of metaphysics must correspond to the God of the religious consciousness. Any real discord between the conceptions of philosophy and of religion imposes on us the task of striving towards coherency. In such matters as the nature of the Supreme Spirit, the relation of God to time and to finite spirits, the Divine immanence and transcendence, the theologian must strive, so far as he consistently can, to bring religious doctrines into concord with the issues of philosophical thinking. The religious mind is prone to be anthropomorphic, and to use analogies freely without examining their validity; while speculative thought represents a more comprehensive and critical method of trying to understand the universe. Hence it supplies a test — not absolute indeed, but certainly valuable — by which theology may be purged from uncritical assumptions, as well as delivered from one-sided conceptions that cannot be thought out consistently. In making this statement I have deliberately introduced qualifications. The theologian, if he is to conserve the values on which the religious life rests, cannot comply with all the demands philosophy has made in the past, or may make in the future. Philosophy, for instance, might insist that explanation means the reduction of all

the differences of experience to an all-embracing identity; it might proclaim (it has done so) that the universe is a single real Being, a timeless Absolute of which all individuals are in the end only unreal appearances. A thoroughgoing monism of this sort, the theologian may fairly protest, does not explain religious values, but explains them away. In an earlier part of this paper I pointed out the importance of bringing the idea of truth as coherence to the test of direct experience. The support received from data of experience guarantees that a consistent thought-system is objectively valid, and is therefore more than formal. In the present instance it is impossible to doubt that religious doctrines are the expression of spiritual experiences which refuse to harmonise with such a theory of the universe. Spiritual selves claim to be real; and our consciousness of freedom and our sense of moral evil decline to be relegated to the category of illusions. Here are experiences which do not fit into the universe conceived as a single real and timelessly perfect Being. The religious consciousness, by thus insisting on its claims to be heard, is able to exercise a wholesome influence on philosophical speculation. It reminds the thinker that religious experience is at least a fact, a fact which he is bound to take into account. A philosophy responsive to this appeal will not sacrifice the

spiritual values to the interests of a speculative monism. It will rather explain the coherence of value and reality teleologically, tracing back the whole system of existences to a Supreme Will which is their Source and End. A speculative theory, which has profited thus by religious experience, is in a position to influence theology in its turn by making plain the directions in which religious doctrines require modification or development. For we have to remember that theological doctrines at best can only claim to represent one phase of experience, and they must be harmonised with experience as a whole. Philosophy is just the endeavour to exhibit the meaning of this wider experience.

Neither philosophy nor theology can lay claim to finality. No theological dogma nor any philosophical theory will be the last word on the subject. Out of the onward moving historic life come new feelings of value and fresh readings of what experience means. A dogma can only be a living form for the present in so far as the spiritual life of the present reads into it its own religious values. A speculative system marks the insight of an age into the meaning of life. But the body of knowledge grows swiftly, and the old synthesis fails to harmonise the increased materials. The very conditions under which man strives to ration-

alise the world preclude more than a partial success:

> "Veil after veil will lift—but there must be
> Veil upon veil behind."

In the circumstances, the philosopher and the theologian, having cast away all pretensions to infallibility, may consult together to advantage. Both offer us a *Weltanschauung*, but it has been reached from different starting-points and by diverse routes. Yet, since both claim to be true, they should agree with each other. If the two world-views will not blend and harmonise, there is need for mutual criticism and counsel. The precise kind of help which the one can render the other will vary at various epochs. The best service philosophical thought can do for theological doctrines at a particular time may be, by criticism to help to purify them from temporary and accidental elements which do not enter into the substance of the spiritual life. At another time the reality and persistency of Christian experience may be an influence which helps to emancipate philosophy from the *impasse* of pantheism, and to lead it in the direction of theism. But whether the issue of interaction between theology and philosophy be a critical or a constructive movement, it will be a movement which plays a part in man's spiritual development. Faith and reason, theology and

philosophy, are forms in which man gives meaning to his experience, and by their interaction they deepen and enlarge his personal life. The rigid separation of the one from the other lessens the possibilities of spiritual progress, and ignores the unity of the mind.

VIII

THE PROBLEM OF THE PERSONALITY OF GOD [1]

BEHIND the specific problems of the Christian evidences lies a deeper and more fundamental problem, and the answer to it will determine our whole attitude to religion. It is notoriously a difficult problem: I refer to the question whether God is a person. The issue here raised is of paramount importance if religion is to justify itself as a way of life. That God is personal is the working postulate of spiritual religion, the foundation on which the religious temple is built. For the religious relation, as we envisage it, is a religion between persons, between God on the one hand and man on the other. I do not, of course, mean that this holds true at every stage of man's history. The lower nature-religions, for instance, move in the region of a vague spiritism, and their gods are relatively characterless beings. But, except in the case of pantheistic and nihilistic systems such as

[1] Appeared in the American *Journal of Religion.*

Brahminism and Buddhism, the growing religious consciousness has more and more clearly defined the religious relation as a personal one, the *I* of the worshipper and the *Thou* of the Deity. Prayer and worship, revelation and inspiration, become unintelligible on any other interpretation. If the values which are bound up with these movements of the religious spirit are to be conserved, then the movements in question must refer to and be justified by the reality of a personal God. If you hold that the predicate 'personal' when applied to the Deity is only a convenient fiction or handy symbol to cover human ignorance, the conclusion follows that the main development of the religious consciousness rests on an illusion. And the inference is inevitable that religion, if it is to survive, must be transformed into something radically different from what it has been in the past. The continuity of religious development must be sacrificed.

It has been suggested that this is not necessary. Some modern thinkers suppose that personality may be denied to God and yet a kind of continuity in religious evolution be preserved. Religion, they tell us truly enough, has passed through certain stages of growth. At a low level deities are sub-personal; at a higher level they are endowed with personality; but even a religion which conceives its deity as one and personal is not final: it belongs

to a stage when the religious mind is still a slave to figurative representations and is quite uncritical in its use of images. An old habit is hard to discard, and Mr. Bradley has told us "we are everywhere dependent on what may be called useful mythology."[1] But these images, though they serve a purpose for a time and have thus a kind of justification, are neither adequate nor really true, and the way of progress lies in gradually setting them aside. One of the images in question is a personal Deity. In future men of enlightenment will think of God as an impersonal Spirit or an unconscious Mind. So, for example, Von Hartmann has told us.

One might raise the question whether the notion of an impersonal spirit is less difficult and more consistent than that of a personal Deity. Without, however, entering on this matter at present, let us note a current of modern thought, more practical perhaps in its origin but yet tending to the same negative conclusion. The movement in question is critical rather than constructive: its natural issue is agnosticism. Its apostles dwell much on the vagaries and contradictions of popular thinking, and they point out how deeply the ordinary mind is committed to the free and uncritical use of analogies. Man never knows how anthropomorphic he is: he began by reading his own life into things,

[1] *Essays on Truth and Reality*, p. 431.

and he has gone on to fashion his gods in his own image. In a well-known passage Matthew Arnold has informed us that "we construct a magnified, non-natural man by dropping out all that in man seems a source of weakness, and by heightening to the very utmost all that in man seems a source of strength." Following the bent of their fancy men have drawn a confused and inconsistent picture of God, and have invested Him with the virtues as well as the defects of a human being. You merely conceal your ignorance from yourself when you project an image of your own personality into the transcendent world. The argument is that we should not pretend to know when we really do not know, and the conclusion is a plea for Agnosticism as the only sane philosophy of life. For what applies to God applies to Theology in general. "There is," says Leslie Stephen, "no proposition of natural theology the negative of which has not been maintained as vigorously as the positive." This is a train of thought which appeals to many in these days, and even to some who, ostensibly at least, have not broken with the Christian religion. In men and women, haunted by these 'obstinate questionings,' the religious outlook is darkened by gloomy clouds, or becomes dim in a feeble and uncertain twilight. It will not be denied, therefore, that anything that can be urged which makes faith in a Divine Personality easier and

more reasonable is a real gain to spiritual religion.

At the outset let us bear in mind that nothing will be won by ignoring the difficulties involved, or by summarily treating doubt on this subject as a wilful and perverse scepticism. The objectors are often quite honest in the perplexities they feel, and the fair-minded apologist will admit they are not to be disposed of in a high-handed fashion. The argument from authority will not meet their case, and one must try to understand their position. Let it be granted, then, that the use of human analogies in reference to God has obvious limitations and easily leads to contradictions. On the other hand, one cannot blink the fact that the idea of an impersonal God or Absolute raises other difficulties of the most serious kind. If the world-ground is impersonal, the emergence of persons within the world-process is a baffling phenomenon for which it is hard to assign a sufficient reason. Moreover, if Agnosticism or Pantheism is right, the claims of the spiritual values cannot be effectively maintained, and it is not easy to see why they should ever have come to be made. If the Supreme Good is a human abstraction and not a Personal Spirit, the whole system of religious values is undermined, and the whole structure of religious faith must ultimately collapse.

In this situation the religious thinker is called on to justify, if possible, his right to speak of God as a personal Being. He must try to give a reason for his faith, if he can. Before we go further, then, let us be clear what we mean by personality, let us understand just how much we suppose is involved in the idea. The term is sometimes used loosely: it may mean self-consciousness simply, or it may denote something more. Yet a Deity who is self-conscious and nothing else—as, for instance, the God of Aristotle who is simply thought reflecting on itself (*νόησις νοήσεως*)—is not all that the Christian means when he says that God is personal. For he implies by the word that God is not only self-conscious, but is an ethical Will and exercises a purposive activity. So much, at least, is involved in the conceptions of Divine Revelation and Divine Providence. Now here we have to meet the objection that we are carrying over into the Divine or Transcendent sphere ideas and activities which have no intelligible meaning save in the mundane sphere. Thinking and willing imply data and limitations, which are present in the case of man but cannot be supposed to exist in the case of God. The objection is definite, and if we are to meet it we must scrutinise the conditions under which human personality develops, that we may decide how far these conditions are essential to any and every

form of personality. It may be possible that the human type of person is not a perfect type nor the only conceivable type.

Beyond all dispute personality in man is a development within the wider whole of experience. Animals and infants are centres of experience, but they do not exist *for* themselves, and we cannot speak of them as persons. They are individuals, however, for they possess an inner life, and as inner unities they are definitely distinguished from what we call things and from other beings of the same class. Individuality is not personality, but it is the presupposition of personality: it is on a pre-existing individual basis that a personal life develops. Personality is an enlargement of individuality, or, if you like, it is individuality raised to a higher power. The person has a being for himself. He has a definite character and sphere of action, with rights and privileges and corresponding responsibilities, and he distinguishes himself from and relates himself to other persons. In common parlance a personality denotes a man of pronounced character. A personal life is a life realised in a society of persons, and it is through this social reference that the life of the individual man receives a specific personal content. The famous ethical precept, "Be a person and respect others as persons," recognises this social implication.

What then appear to be the specific conditions which make the development of a finite personal existence possible? From what has been said I think we may conclude that a twofold dependence is involved.

1. There is first the contrast to an external world of facts or objects which are recognised to be other than the self. Persons stand over against things. It is the task of the psychologist to trace the steps of this process of differentiation by which the self comes to oppose itself to the not-self. Obviously one of the first stages is the distinction of the body from its environment, the perception that it belongs to the active individual in a way that other objects do not. A further stage is the recognition of the self as an inner centre of ideation and desire; and, finally, we rise to the thought of a pure ego or self which sustains and unifies all its activities. As Professor Ward puts it: "We begin with self simply as an object perceived or imagined, and end with the concept of that object as subject or myself."[1] Now it is clear that the development of this duality of subject and object is not accomplished by us apart from the contrast of the non-ego, and it is through this contrast that we eventually reach the conception of the self as an inner centre which is distinguished from the content of its experience.

[1] *Psychological Principles*, p. 363.

Were there no distinction in reality the emergence of the distinction in idea would lack a reason. It is by marking off a region of the experienced world as belonging to the not-self that we define the sphere of the self.

2. In a somewhat similar way the self comes to recognise itself as personal in connexion with and in contrast to a society of other persons. If we interpret others through ourselves, the knowledge of others also reacts on our self-knowledge. Broadly speaking, we may say that personal and social development advance *pari passu*, and, apart from intersubjective intercourse taking form in language, the individual would never advance to a generalised conception of himself at all. "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." It is especially through the relations, positive and negative, to other persons in a social system that the concept of personality, as an ethical unity implying rights and obligations, is developed. The character and content which are involved in the notion of a person could never be evolved by the self in isolation: its intrinsic resources do not suffice for that.

So far, at least, one would expect general agreement about the interpretation of the facts; the next step, however, raises a question of critical importance. The ego, we admit, comes to a

developed knowledge of itself through its relations; but does this mean that the self is a pure abstraction apart from these relations? Some contend that it is so: the relation to the non-ego, they argue, is essential, and apart from it any self becomes a mere fiction. The not-self and the self are as inseparable as, say, the outside of a thing and the inside. And they conclude that the Absolute or God, as the all-embracing Whole, transcends the contrast of ego and non-ego, and therefore cannot be self-conscious and personal. Personality, it is said, is the specific subsistence-form of the finite spirit, and has no application to God who is infinite and absolute.[1] The premises of the argument, nevertheless, may be called in question. We may maintain, with Lotze, that the self is more than the relations into which it enters, and that the ego as in some sense real is the condition of its sustaining relations at all. In fact relations without a *fundamentum relationis* are a sheer abstraction. Moreover, if there were not an original feeling or experience of self, the process by which the self is discriminated from the not-self would lack a basis on which to develop. To put it in a slightly different form, the conceptual process by which the ego defines itself is made possible by

[1] So Biedermann, *Dogmatik*, 1869, p. 559 ff. Cp. Mactaggart, *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology*, p. 68.

the contrast with the non-ego; but the conceptual process only comes into operation because there is a primary and original feeling or experience of self which is the condition of the process.

In his *Microcosmus* Lotze argues in a suggestive way, that the function of the non-ego in developing the general consciousness of the self is a note of the limitation which attaches to finite personality rather than the essence of personality. It will serve our purpose at this point to indicate briefly, and in our own fashion, the line of argument.

The mark of perfection in personality is internal consistency and completeness: the perfect self fully penetrates, organises, and owns its content. The finite self never achieves this. It depends for its internal development on stimuli coming from without, stimuli which it often can neither avoid nor control. It is constantly hampered and thwarted by an external environment which it masters incompletely, and can but partially transform into a means for its own ends. The body is an imperfect instrument of the soul, and serves only as the basis of an intermittent self-consciousness. It seems to be a condition of our conscious life that there should be regular lapses into the region of the unconscious or the subconscious. Again, man conserves his mental resources for present use by dropping out of memory much that he once knew: in the history of a personal life a mass of

experiences are thus forgotten, and the self, even when it remembers earlier phases of its experience, may lose the power to enter into and sympathise with them. This lack of inner completeness and consistency appears especially in the moral sphere where a struggle goes on between a higher and a lower self, or, in Pauline phrase, between the spiritual and the natural man. This conflict is never crowned by the full and final victory which is presupposed by a perfect ethical self-determination. Hence under mundane conditions the human self never attains to inner harmony, and never perfectly unifies the content of its experience: personality remains an ideal only partially realised. This is what we should expect when we remember that the finite self does not contain within itself the conditions of its own existence. For this reason we cannot suppose that personality in man is more than an imperfect analogy or defective copy of personality in God. The limitations to which we are subject cannot have a counterpart in the Divine Nature, and this is the reason why some prefer to speak of God as supra-personal. There need be no objection to the word, so long as the elements of ethical and spiritual value connoted by personality are conserved in the conception of the Deity.

The crucial question is: With what modifications can we take the category of personality known in

our experience and apply it to God? The theistic conception is that of a Being who is ground of all that exists, but is only limited in so far as He limits Himself. God, therefore, cannot be confronted, as man is, with an independent not-self which is the condition of the development of His self-consciousness. But is self-consciousness conceivable on these terms? Here let us bear in mind that even in man an original self-experience was the presupposition of the evolution of self-consciousness. And though the process of development was mediated by the not-self, yet this dependence constituted a limitation. The more a man is conditioned by external facts and impressions, the weaker is his personality. The growth of personality in man takes the form of a development towards internal completeness, unity, and self-determination. Now the ideal man strives after in the temporal process of experience must be an eternally complete reality in God. A difficulty would no doubt still remain, if we suppose that God is a pure unity from which every element of difference and change is excluded. But this is not a possible conception. The difference involved in self-consciousness falls within the Divine Nature: it is given in the distinction between the Divine Self and its changing states. The contrast between the Divine and the human ego would lie in the fact that the Divine conscious-

ness is continuous and complete in itself, while that of man is broken and dependent on conditions outside itself. The Divine self-consciousness would be a perfect self-consciousness, since it is entirely self-contained and self-conditioned, and perfectly unifies its own experience. For the element of dependence on what lies beyond the self, present in the case of man, falls away in the case of God.

Yet there is more in personality than pure self-consciousness. As we saw in the instance of man, it was the practical relations of social life, the interaction of wills in a social system, which developed and gave content to the idea of a person. The concrete conception of personality implies action; and when we think of God as personal we think of Him as an active and ethical Will who is ground both of the world of existences and the realm of values. The static idea of God, the idea of a Being resting in the eternal contemplation of Himself, is more in harmony with Deism than with a genuine Theism. To the theist God is essentially active and creative, the living and ever present ground of the universe which He sustains. We entangle ourselves in intolerable contradictions if we suppose that God rested in the contemplation of Himself for an indefinite time, and then, suddenly quickened to activity, brought the world and finite spirits into being by an arbitrary act of

will. It is impossible to conceive an explanation of this abrupt outbreak of creative activity at a particular point in time; for, if the creation of the world meant the realisation of a good, then we must suppose that prior to the creative act God was content with a defect of good. The difficulty here is partly due to the fact that we imagine our concept of time, gradually elaborated on the basis of mundane experience, existed prior to the experience out of which it was developed. Augustine, following Plato, sought to obviate this perplexity by saying that God brought time into being along with the world: *non in tempore sed cum tempore finxit Deus mundum.* The truth seems to be that we cannot fit the Divine creative activity into our time-scheme at all: the more adequate idea is to think of God as the eternally creative ground of the world and finite spirits. In other words, we must abandon the static conception of God, and hold that it belongs to His character to be self-revealing, to actualise His Will in a world of interacting things and persons. In the Christian doctrine of the Logos, and in the recurring thought of Scripture that God is love, there is the suggestion that self-communication is a need of the Divine Nature. The spiritual and ethical idea of God is not that of a Being who is self-centred, but who is self-manifesting. In the case of man ethical personality was developed in relation to a

society of persons: the individual personality is enlarged and enriched by the social relations into which it enters. And there is something in the human analogy which is helpful to us here. God as an ethical and spiritual person is manifested in the world of spirits that He sustains and redeems. Apart from this expression of Himself in the world of souls that He disciplines and inspires the Divine Personality would lack fulness of meaning and content.

The line of thought I have been trying to suggest receives support, I venture to believe, from Christian experience. The conception of the personal God in which the Christian rests and finds satisfaction is that of the God who reveals Himself in and to man, whose goodness and love are reflected in the face of Jesus Christ. To justify so far as possible on general grounds the conception of personality as applied to God demands, as we have seen, metaphysical thinking; and against Ritschl and his followers we must insist that theology cannot be divorced from metaphysics. On the other hand, Ritschlian theologians are right in claiming that the Divine Personality can only receive its full ethical meaning and content when brought into living relation with the revelation in Christ. But this supreme revelation has its presupposition in that wider activity of

God in virtue of which He sustains all souls and works in and through them.

The view here outlined has to be carefully distinguished from the speculative Idealism which merges all spirits into the Absolute Spirit, and treats them as phases or moments of its life. On this theory finite minds are differentiated from God and one another by standing in organic relation to material bodies; but their being for self is only apparent, and in the end they all fall within the Absolute Mind. In other words, religious communion between the human and the Divine Spirit is construed as a process of identification. Though the language of some mystics gives countenance to this idea, it does not truly express the normal religious consciousness, which involves a real element of difference as well as a relation of dependence. The view here suggested is definitely distinguished from this theory by the acceptance of the conception of God as the Creative Will who gives reality to a dependent world and a kingdom of finite spirits. I am far from supposing the idea of creation raises no difficulties—as a matter of fact we can only think of it through imperfect analogies — but the point is whether any other idea does not raise still greater difficulties. It has been justly said that if, in trying to apprehend the relation of God to the world, "the idea of creation will carry us

further, and if nothing else will, then the idea . . . is rationally justified though it be not empirically verified."[1]

In harmony with this the Divine immanence must always be taken in connexion with the Divine transcendence. The so-called indwelling of God in man's spiritual experience cannot mean that that experience is simply God's experience: it does mean that there is an activity of the Divine Spirit making itself felt in quickening and inspiring human spirits. The religious man does not seek to become God: he aspires to a concord of life and will with God.

The personality of God as an ethical Spirit is expressed through His manifold dealings with the great company of souls who owe their being and life to Him. And man's response to God is seen in his age-long endeavour to transcend his narrow individual existence and gain a full spiritual and personal life. It is the great God-ward movement of souls. The direction of the movement is best defined through the historic revelation in which God's personal character is expressed, for if man seeks God if haply he may find Him, God in turn seeks man. It is through the increasing spiritual apprehension of the seeking and saving God revealed in the society of redeemed and upward-

[1] Ward, *Realm of Ends*, p. 246.

striving souls that man advances to the fruition of his personal life. Apart from God, the perfect Personality, our broken and fragmentary personalities cannot reach completeness and fulfilment.

IX

THE QUESTION OF THE ESSENCE OF CHRISTIANITY

THE problem of the Essence of Christianity is a modern one. It did not suggest itself to the theologians of the early or of the mediæval Church as a question calling for an answer. And the same is true of the theologians of the Reformation period. But during last century various influences conspired to raise the subject, and notably the growing conviction that elements had gathered round the Christian faith which were not vital to it. Moreover, the increasing knowledge of the ethnic religions, with their affinities and differences as made plain by the comparative study of them, provoked an enquiry into the essential basis of religion. This, of course, raised the problem how far the true nature of religion was expressed in particular religions.

It is not possible to do justice to any one religion in abstraction from the larger development of religion, and the view we take of the essence of

religion will affect our interpretation of the essence of Christianity. For the latter problem is a specific instance of the larger one, and the issues are to some extent interdependent. The complete isolation of Christianity is therefore a mistake. A man's valuation of religion is reflected in his judgment about Christianity, and his appreciation of Christianity in turn influences his attitude to other religions.

I propose then, by way of introduction to the specific question before us, to say something in regard to the essence of religion. But first let us be clear what we mean by the phrase. Now the word essence may be used with different meanings, meanings which it is important to distinguish. It may be taken to denote the feature in religions which is common, that which remains after accidental variations have been eliminated. Or it may suggest the substantial and real in religion which is reached by discarding superficial appearances. Neither of these conceptions indicates a way by which it is possible to reach a convincing conclusion. Logically it is false to suppose that by carefully eliminating differences and working back to a common element, you will thereby reach what is vital. True universals are not reached by a process of abstraction. The common ground at which you arrive by this method turns out to be a colourless residuum which does not explain any-

thing. On the other hand, if you set out to define the substance of religion in contrast to what you term the appearances, you are assuming a standard of valuation which you have neither explained nor justified. You tacitly presuppose at the beginning that which should be the goal of the enquiry, and your procedure consequently lacks an assured basis.

The word essence, it is well known, came into use as a rendering of the Aristotelian *οὐσία*, which signified the true being or nature of a thing; and the rule of Aristotle, that to know the essence is to apprehend the causal (*δίοτι*) or generative principle of the phenomenon, is so far a sound one. If this be so, the essence of religion must be taken to involve some reference to the constitutive factors of the religious consciousness, the universal principles which bring the phenomenon of religion to birth.

A further consideration emerges here. In the case of a historic phenomenon explanation may have two meanings. It may signify an ultimate and final explanation, and if so the enquiry involves a metaphysical discussion of the nature of man in his relation to God and the universe. The problem, however, may be treated in the first instance as psychological; and then we shall confine ourselves to an investigation of the psychical elements or principles which generate religion as a

human experience, and are everywhere and always active where it comes into being. The psychological problem no doubt leads up to the ontological, but it is with the former that we are at this stage concerned.

Our conclusion so far is, that the essential and vital elements in religion are not to be found in a common residuum, but in the psychical forces or factors which produce religion. These have to be defined by means of a psychological and historical enquiry, an enquiry which embraces both the individual and collective aspects of religious experience. As a matter of method, even at the beginning of the enquiry, we must bring with us a tentative or provisional idea of what religion really means, and this idea we must go on to test, and, if need be, to correct and supplement, in the light of the phenomena. Proceeding in this fashion we may hope to see with growing clearness what features are accidental, and what are spurious accretions, in contrast to those which belong to the living substance. Religion regarded historically is a complex of the most varied beliefs, rites, and customs. These differ very greatly in their importance; while there are some things often associated with religion about which we may well ask whether they have any religious value or not. Does magic, for instance, belong to the nature of religion or does it not? To pass a final judgment on such

matters can only be arbitrary and unconvincing unless we have been able to make clear what religion really is. If we have done so, then we can evaluate the elements in the religious complex according as they stand in more or less intimate relation to the central and constitutive factors of the process. We shall be able to distinguish the parasitic growth from that which proceeds from the life of the organism.

In dealing with this subject it is necessary to take a wide view, and to study religion as a living development in human experience. In so doing we must try to understand the inner and formative forces in the mind of man which reveal themselves in the growth of his religion. Only thus can we apprehend religion from its inward side and appreciate its germinal principles. To do so rightly the critic should stand in sympathetic *rapport* with his object, and have some experience of the working of religion in his personal life. The man totally destitute of religious faith and feeling will at the best prove an external and superficial critic of religious experience. It is in and through our own consciousness that we can interpret the psychological processes of others, while the study of a collective and historic experience serves to correct and enlarge the individual judgment. What the individual personally feels to be the essence of religion he should seek to

verify historically by showing that it is the moving principle of the religious process in its manifold forms. Many faulty theories of the central principle of the religious experience would never have been maintained had they been carefully tested in the field of historic religion. To illustrate what I mean: the theory that fear is the essence of religion, or the view that its root is the need for explanation, would never have survived a fair and careful examination of the religious experience itself. There is a danger in trying to simplify too much, for it leads us to emphasise certain facts and to pass lightly over, or even to ignore, other facts. Here as elsewhere there is always a temptation to strain the interpretation of the phenomena in order to save the theory. We have another example of the tendency to simplify the problem unduly in the assumption that, if we go back to the lowest and most elementary forms of the religious life, we shall see before us the essence of religion. For we shall discover there the fact divested of all that is adventitious and accidental. So it is argued; but the argument rests on a presupposition which will not stand criticism. In the first place, we have no evidence of a religion which is purely primitive and rudimentary. The earliest forms of religion that we know have already a long development behind them. In the second place, even though we had such evidence, we have no right to infer that it

would reveal to us fairly and fully the essence of religion. For that is not to be won by narrowing the development of religion to a particular point, in this instance the supposed beginning of the process. Nothing is really gained by limiting the field of survey in this fashion. The so-called facts of primitive religion are readily interpreted in very different ways, and have been made to yield confirmation of very different theories.[1]

If religion be, as the facts show, a developing movement which passes through various stages, and assumes changing modes of expression, the sure and safe course is to regard the process as a whole, so far as that is possible. The more complete our view of the relevant facts, the better shall we be able to trace out the essential and persisting elements. It is only when we see how the process of development corrects and overcomes the partial and exaggerated manifestations of the religious spirit, that we are led to a more adequate and comprehensive conception of the nature of that spirit. To illustrate this. The view to which I have already referred, that religion is rooted in fear, has a superficial plausibility if you take for granted that the essence of religion stands out in the lowest nature-religions. At this stage terror

[1] For instance some think that primitive religion is rooted in magic, others in totemism, while there are those who interpret it as springing from a vague fear of unknown powers.

of unseen powers played a large part in human life. But the theory ceases to be plausible when you take a broader outlook on the development of religion, and recognise how religion seeks to satisfy a larger body of human needs. In this system of needs, fear is merely a subordinate element. The truth is that the essence of religion is not expressed with the same fulness and clearness by all the phases of its evolution. Fetishism, for instance, is a distorted manifestation of the religious spirit in which its real nature is overlaid with alien elements: totemism and ancestor-worship, on the other hand, are at least capable of suggesting more of its true meaning. Hence breadth of view is just as necessary as concentration on details; for it is in the development of religious experience as a whole rather than in any one of its phases, that the constitutive principles of the process are to be discerned.

Religion is complex, and we may well conclude from the foregoing argument that it is better to renounce the attempt to express the essence of it by any single idea. Attempts of the kind have been made, and they are sometimes suggestive, though they are never adequate. The late Professor Tiele, a most competent student of religion, found the essence of religion in adoration.[1] The writer has here emphasised a characteristic of

[1] *Science of Religion*, vol. ii. p. 198 ff.

religion, more particularly in its higher forms. But if the essence is the constitutive or moving force in the religious consciousness, there is a good deal more in it than adoration. Other motives are active in impelling men to find satisfaction in religion, and conspicuously so at its earlier stages. A particular feeling or attitude of mind may be necessary to religion, and yet not be identical with the whole essence. If, then, we take essence in the sense of the vital and necessary principles which underlie and determine the religious consciousness in its process of development, we have to try to state them in answer to the problem before us. An adequate answer, if that were possible, would imply a very full examination of the religious experience itself, and this lies beyond the scope of the present paper. It must suffice to set down briefly what appear to be the conclusions of such an investigation.

The most general presuppositions of the religious consciousness are a subject and an object, with the further qualification that the subject is neither complete nor self-sufficing. Out of the incompleteness of the subject proceed the needs which constantly call for satisfaction. It is distinctive of the religious attitude that it is a complex of emotional, volitional, and intellectual elements in the subject, elements which find expression in an act of faith in the object. That

object, regarded as divine, is conceived to have power to satisfy the needs of the subject; and to win this satisfaction the individual strives to maintain a right relation to the spirits or gods through acts of worship, sacrifice, or service. A spirit believed to be powerless is never worshipped, and an individual who believed he had himself power to supply all his needs would feel no inclination to worship. Religion by its very nature involves faith on man's part in a power beyond himself, a power with whom he seeks to hold converse, and to whom he directs his worship. To grasp rightly, however, the essential in religion, it is necessary to bring out more explicitly what is implied in the foregoing statement. Two points require to be made clear and to be emphasised. In the first place, the essence of religion contains a transcendent reference. That is to say, the object of religious belief or faith always lies in the Beyond: it is never an ordinary object among other objects. Even in the lowest religions the spirits men worship are not common objects in their environment: they are invisible powers in and behind outward things. In the highest spiritual religion God transcends the outward world in space and time. The transcendent element in religion is vital. In the second place, the act of belief or faith by which a man relates himself to his god is no mere individual act, an act

valid for himself only. Man always thinks of his religious belief as shared by his fellows, and it is mediated for him through his share or inheritance in the beliefs of the social group or religious society. His faith is a common faith; it demands corporate expression, and forms an inner bond of union between the members of the group or people. Religion is at once individual and social.

So far we have been trying to exhibit what is essential in religion in the form of general constitutive principles. But the statement is, after all, a formal one, and cannot be taken to mean that these principles adequately set forth the concrete and impelling motives of religion at every stage of its historic evolution. For these motives have varied, alike in individuals and in groups, at different epochs and in different situations. The constitutive elements of religion have received varying emphasis during the course of development, and an element which is dominant in one period may be subordinate in another. Yet certainly there is an endeavour of the religious spirit to overcome partial and exaggerated expressions, and to reach beyond them to a truer and fuller embodiment of itself. Extremes provoke a reaction, for what man seeks in religion is not the satisfaction of a single insistent need, but the fulfiment of his spiritual nature as a whole.

If we choose, therefore, to identify these formal

principles with the essence of religion, I do not think they will supply us with the key to the actual movements of religion in the process of its evolution. That key is rather a psychological one: in other words, it is the way in which the fundamental elements of religion have severally appealed to the souls of men. That appeal has been various, and the consequent expressions of religion have varied. If, then, we identify the essence with the moving forces in religious development, we cannot resist the conclusion that the essence has not remained identical throughout. The conception of the essence is notably different in the Hindu, the Hebrew, and the ancient Roman, to take obvious illustrations. The essence thus eludes statement in an absolute form, if by essence you mean a principle which underlies and determines the whole development of religion, and explains each specific phase of the religious consciousness.

Let us now turn to consider the relation of the essence of Christianity to the essence of religion in general. Christianity has a character of its own: what constitutes this? The answer implies a statement of the characteristic element or elements in Christianity in virtue of which it is differentiated from other religions. In other words, we must show that Christianity embodies the general essence of religion and also possesses something

peculiar to itself. It is the problem how this specific or characteristic element is to be defined, as well as the method by which such a definition is to be reached, which has caused controversy. The difficulty, I have already said, is a modern one. The older theologians found little difficulty in solving it to their satisfaction: for them Christianity was clearly differentiated from all other religions because it was a supernatural and revealed religion. I may remark in passing that you cannot express the inner nature of Christianity in this way. But if we waive this point, we must still insist that the modern student of religion cannot adopt a rigid line of division, which is determined by theological presuppositions rather than the nature of the material. A psychological and historical interpretation of the essence of Christianity cannot employ absolute distinctions like those of natural and supernatural, distinctions which can only be justified, if at all, by Metaphysics. It might seem more hopeful to seek for the essence of Christianity in a doctrine or group of doctrines always associated with it, doctrines therefore that have a *prima facie* claim not to be treated as accidental. Yet doctrines have changed their significance and value from age to age, and no one doctrine has had the same place and meaning through all the stages of Christian history. Moreover, if the essence goes to the making of the Christian

experience, then formulated doctrines of theology do not create the experience but rather grow out of it. In other words, the essence lies deeper than the theological propositions by which men have sought to define and formulate the Christian creed. In the ages of productive theology, as we have seen, the conception of an essence of the Christian faith was not before the minds of theologians, nor were they in the habit of distinguishing doctrines which were fundamental from those which were secondary. The assumption was, that the creed as a whole was the full and adequate statement of the nature of Christianity. In modern times the development of science and philosophy, and the study of historical origins, have undermined this assumption. Hence the validity of various doctrines is disputed, their legitimate connexion with the Christian experience called in question, their authoritative and obligatory character denied. Out of this has arisen the habit of speaking of doctrines which are fundamental in distinction from those which are not fundamental.[1] Hence there has emerged the problem of defining

[1] In recent years the Church of Scotland altered the formula of subscription to the Westminster Confession. Formerly candidates for the Ministry were required to subscribe to the Confession as a whole: now they are only asked to subscribe to the "fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith" as contained therein. It is significant, however, that the Church has not tried to define the doctrines which are 'fundamental.'

explicitly essential Christianity, in other words, of stating the elements that enter into the substance of the Christian faith. We have, however, already tried to show that the problem is not to be solved in this way. For theological propositions which remain verbally the same change their real meaning and value in the course of historic development.

Men are now coming to recognise that the solution of the problem, if it is to be achieved, must be attempted on different lines. It is to the inner life of the Christian religion that we must turn rather than to its doctrinal expression. Now Christianity is a historic religion which arose directly out of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ; and like all religions which go back to a personal founder, it traces its specific and typical character to that founder. The essence of Christianity, therefore, involves a reference to Christ. As a marked illustration of this Christo-centric tendency I may quote a sentence from a recent work on the History of Christianity. "The essence of Christianity is Christ: its method the influence of personality on personality."[1] As a suggestive and popular statement this perhaps might be accepted, but as a considered answer to the question at issue it is inadequate. For it decides nothing in regard to the meaning and

[1] *Christianity in History*, 1917, by Bartlet and Carlyle, p. 39.

value of Christ; nor does it settle the problem of the validity of varying conceptions of his person and work and their relation to the development of the Christian religion. One has only to ask, Does Christ mean the Christ of the Synoptic Gospels, or of Paul, or of the Fourth Gospel? to realise the questions which are raised by a statement apparently so clear and simple.

If we come to the reasoned attempts which have been made to solve the problem, a prominent place must be assigned to Harnack's Lectures translated under the title, *What is Christianity?* Harnack, in common with the Ritschlian theologians, conceives the question to be at root an historical one, and the main point is to determine the original character of the religion itself. To do this let us understand what Christianity meant for Christ, let us go back to the gospel of Jesus Himself. For in so doing we apprehend the gospel within the gospel. In his quest after the evangelical core of Christianity Harnack finds it necessary to eliminate large portions of the New Testament. The Pauline Epistles and the Fourth Gospel, for instance, are excluded, and attention is concentrated on what is taken to be the message of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels. Yet even here further discrimination is needed, and the apocalyptic element is discarded. The original gospel

thus reached by selection of material is the Fatherhood of God, with its associated doctrines of the sonship of man, the infinite value of the soul, and the higher righteousness of the Kingdom of God. This is the living core of Christianity. For Harnack, like others of his school, simplification is the key that unlocks the door which opens into the inner shrine of Christian truth. And in the process of simplification the theology which grew up around the person of Christ falls to be eliminated: it is a distortion of the pure evangel due to the influence of Hellenistic thought. We see the same desire to simplify in theologians like Adams Brown and Kaftan, who identify essential Christianity with the Kingdom of God, though the latter also links with it the atonement which is needed to make the Kingdom of God real among sinful men.[1]

Two broad questions are raised by Harnack's investigation. In the first place: Is the problem of the Essence of Christianity to be decided, as Harnack takes for granted, by a purely historical enquiry? In the second place: Can you justify the method of solving the problem by going back to the origin of Christianity and restricting your view to that? Let us consider these two points.

1. At first blush it seems very plausible to

[1] Adams Brown, *Christian Theology in Outline*, p. 37. Kaftan, *Dogmatik*, pp. 8, 19.

maintain that the problem is to be solved historically. Surely we ought not to allow philosophical presuppositions to sway us in deciding what the real nature of Christianity is! Surely we should elicit the answer by a dispassionate examination of the actual facts! We neglect facts at our peril, as many a wrecked theory warns us. Harnack points to the errors of those speculative theologians who followed the *a priori* method, and construed the historic data to suit their preconceived theories. Let the danger be admitted, nevertheless the arguments that a purely historical study yields the result we are seeking do not convince us. It is very well to say, let the facts decide, but in history there is no such thing as bare facts. Facts only enter into the historic process when they are charged with meaning and value: it is values which move human wills, and values therefore are the moving forces in historic development. The problem is not one of observation merely, but of appreciation. The historian has to exercise a selection on his material: he has to set in relief the facts which count, so to speak, and he does so by a process of valuation in which he distinguishes the relevant from the irrelevant. The standard of appreciation thus involved is never given by a purely historical enquiry. That the difficulty is real is shown by the criticism of Harnack's Lectures by Loisy in his volume

L'Evangile et L'Eglise. Loisy contends that Harnack's treatment is really a Protestantising and modernising of the gospel. Far from being strictly historical in his elucidation of the essence of Christianity, he exalts to the position of essential what to the mind of Jesus was only secondary. That is to say, Harnack makes the core of Christ's gospel ethical instead of eschatological. His Christ is not the Christ of history, but of Liberal Protestantism.

Without endorsing Loisy's extreme view, one must at least admit that Harnack sets the ethical element in the Kingdom in the foreground and relatively neglects the apocalyptic; and he does so in accordance with his valuation of the materials in the Gospels. To him the ethical element in Christ's teaching is central and most important, and he finds it to be the core of Christianity. Whether he is right or wrong here is not the question: the point is that he is employing a principle of appreciation which is not present in the Gospels, where ethical and eschatological elements stand side by side without any sense of incongruity. The truth is that even in the Synoptic Gospels there is a complex of beliefs and ideas, ethical, apocalytic, Messianic, Judaistic, and universalistic; and a critic like Harnack, who wishes to make explicit the 'gospel within the Gospels,' can only select the essential and eliminate the

accidental, because he has already in his mind an ideal of what Christianity should be. This serves to show that the theologian who seeks to determine the essence is led inevitably beyond purely historical considerations.

2. Our second point is the validity of the method which determines the Essence of Christianity by going back to its beginnings and excluding its process of development. Harnack's motive in doing so is quite intelligible. He has convinced himself that the gospel of Jesus is pure Christianity, while the growth of Christian doctrines in the main represents a falling away from the spirit of the gospel. The metaphysical elements imported into Christianity through the influence of Hellenism led to a distortion of the evangel, and the beginnings of this movement are already patent in the Pauline Epistles and the Fourth Gospel. In the post-Apostolic age the tendency grew, with the result that the creeds of the fourth and fifth centuries have diverged far from the simple gospel of Jesus. The line of real progress lies in discarding these accretions and returning to the mind of Christ. As Harnack reads the growth of Christian doctrine, it was a process of degeneration. Against this we may fairly contend that the theology of the early Church was a progressive endeavour, an endeavour which had a relative justification, to express the meaning and values of the Christian

religion in terms of the spiritual experience and thought of the age.

Without discussing this question, however, let us consider if it is practicable to seek the essence of Christianity at its beginning, and apart from its later development. Here Harnack assumes that he is able to state the essential features of the religion of Jesus. To do this, as we saw, he had to interpret and exercise a selection on the New Testament records, and his results have been challenged. But there are other difficulties. After all, the essence of Christ's religious consciousness, granted that you could define it beyond dispute, is not quite the same as the essence of Christianity as a historic religion. For that was contained in the religious consciousness of the followers of Jesus and their successors from age to age. If we speak accurately, we shall say that the faith of Christians was more than the faith of Christ: it was also a faith *in* Christ, and this faith embodied itself in very definite conceptions of His person and work. On Harnack's theory these conceptions have nothing to do with the essence, they are wrong in principle, and they have proved a very fatal legacy to the later Church. In his view the core of Christianity is the religious consciousness of Jesus Himself, and not the conceptions which men formed about Him. Now it may be true that we cannot take the metaphysical statements about the

person of Christ, which are contained in the creeds of the fourth and fifth centuries, as entering into the vital substance of Christian faith; yet to say this is not to say that faith in Christ does not belong to the essence of Christianity. In truth, the development of Christianity becomes unintelligible if you suppose there was no more in it than faith in the words of Jesus: you must posit faith in Christ Himself, and the presence of His spirit with believers, or the growth of historic Christianity becomes a mystery. For this faith was the moving element in the Christian experience, and so in the development of the Church which arose out of that experience.

At this point I shall put forward some general considerations in favour of the view that the essence of Christianity is not to be found apart from its development as a whole. In the case of religion in general, we saw that its complete nature was not to be gathered from its beginnings: we only discern how much is involved in the beginnings of a movement when we study the later issues. Similarly the value of Christ and the historic significance of Christianity can hardly be read clearly in the Synoptic Gospels: you only rightly appreciate them in the light of that soul-renewing development of religion of which Christ was the source. In dealing with Christianity we are dealing with a historic religion which, just

because it was a living faith, had a momentous expansion; and the intrinsic resources, the meaning and driving factors, of that process can only be learned from the study of the actual development. The nature of the religion is seen more or less clearly in the way in which it reacted on its environment, seeking to meet the difficulties and solve the problems which pressed on it from age to age. There is nothing to be gained by a refusal to look beyond the beginnings of the Christian religion in order to discover its essence; and it is really a disparagement of historic Christianity if we exalt this essence into a norm by which to test and condemn the subsequent growth of theology. Surely the better way is to study sympathetically the development of the religion, that so we may discover its permanent and organising elements; for these will maintain themselves, while the accidental and superficial appear for a little and then vanish away. Yet by merely observing the growth of Christianity its essence will not meet our vision. In this connexion Loisy's method is instructive if compared with Harnack's. For Loisy, historic origins are relatively unimportant. For him the precise religious beliefs of Jesus are not a matter of moment. What is important is the living evolution of the Church's faith and doctrine to meet the changing needs of a changing world. Hence the essential is just the expansive

spiritual life of the Church ever embodying itself in fresh forms. On this theory the whole stress is laid on the developing life of the Catholic Church, and there is no means of distinguishing what is essential from what is accidental. For the facts of development are the revelation of life, and each stage of evolution is justified until it is transcended by the growing life of the Church. In brief, the essence is swallowed up in the movement: it cannot be construed as the abiding and organising centre of the Christian experience.

Theologians who have been influenced by the idealism of Hegel have naturally recognised the importance of the development of Christianity for the understanding of its inner nature.[1] The essence, it is said, merely immanent in the beginning, explicates itself in the course of the development which it pervades and dominates. Hence the nature of the religion comes to light in the process of its historic evolution. The analogy of organic evolution, which proceeds from the germ to the mature and fully articulated individual, is often suggested as an illustration. The essence on this theory becomes the ideal nature which, as immanent idea, governs the course of Christian development. Theologians of this type were usually much influenced by specu-

[1] Among later theologians this tendency is represented by Biedermann, Pfleiderer, and A. Dorner.

lative presuppositions when they determined this ideal, though no doubt they professed to find a verification of it in the historic evolution of Christian religion. The ideal was commonly found in the notion of a perfect divine-humanity, the full and harmonious union of man and God of which the Incarnation is a figurative representation or symbol. The conception can be set forth in a broad and suggestive way as the inner truth of Christian development, but this must not blind us to the insuperable difficulties of carrying it out in detail. The Christian religion in its historic growth is far too complex to be explained as the unfolding of a single idea, and many influences entered into the process of which this idea is not the key. Moreover, it is a grave defect in this theory that it shifts the centre of power and influence from the historic Christ to a principle or ideal of which He cannot be more than the symbol; for this means that the principle of Christian development is cut loose from the historic life in which it is really rooted. In other words, the historic Christ who created the Christian consciousness, and who had an enduring value for Christian faith, does not receive the emphasis that is indispensable if the facts of Christian development are to be understood. The truth is, we shall not discover the essence of Christianity, nor of any other historic movement, in a generalised idea won

by philosophical reflexion. The moving element in history is not a speculative idea, but the values which grow out of the historic life, and these values vary in meaning and appeal from age to age. You cannot sum them all up in a single comprehensive principle: the proof lies in the failure of any such principle to explain the historic data. Baur, for instance, professed to have found the key to the evolution of Christianity in a single dominating principle: almost no one now believes that he succeeded.

If the essence of Christianity is not to be reached apart from its historic development, the problem still remains if we can reach it in this way. We stand to lose, and mistakes will certainly be made, if we ignore the complexity of the question at issue. Christianity, as we see it in process of growth, is a complicated mass of beliefs and rites, doctrines and institutions, and the relative place and significance of these have undergone manifold changes in the course of time. No one has made clearer the complexity and difficulty of the problem than Troeltsch in his highly suggestive discussion of the subject.[1] Troeltsch, it seems to me, is right in holding that, if we seek the essence of Christianity in some unitary principle or idea, then the actual development of Christianity does not

[1] *Vide* "Das Wesen des Christenthums," in vol. ii. of his *Gesammelte Schriften.*

distinctly reveal to us any such idea or principle. What we do find there is a body of beliefs, of which now one and now another appears in the foreground, but no one of which has dominated the development throughout. For example, in the Apostolic age the apocalyptic idea was prominent. Already in the Fourth Gospel the eschatological element is fading into the background, and we are passing into the period when the living centre of interest was the person of Christ and His relation to God. In the mediæval period it is the authoritative Church and the sacramental system which fill the foreground of the scene. In the modern era the centre of interest has again shifted: accuracy of doctrine has ceased to be a vital concern, and that indifference to the world with which the Christian religion began is superseded by another spirit. What is important is judged to be the establishment of a living relation between religious faith and the problems of life and society. It is not open to doubt, therefore, that, had the question of the essence of the Christian religion been raised at different stages of its development, the answers would have been different. The essential would have been identified with that aspect of Christianity which was uppermost in the mind of the age. Even men of the same day are not always agreed about the substance of Christianity. The Protestant view diverges from the

Roman Catholic, and within Protestantism there are differences of opinion on the point. As Troeltsch has contended, the personal attitude comes out in the act of appreciation, and the individual's estimate of Christianity as a whole influences his judgment of what is essential in it. In trying to reach a conclusion he desires to study religious experiences and beliefs dispassionately, but he cannot help being swayed by his judgment of the truth of the experience. If a man regards beliefs which have played an important part in the development of Christianity as mythical, he will tend to exclude them from his conception of the essential. So the Modernist who thinks that criticism has undermined the historicity of the Gospels, finds the essential not in the historic Christ, but in the developing life of the Church.

It may be argued that it is a mistake to allow ideas of what is ultimately true to bias our judgment of the essence of Christianity. Ultimate truth, we may be told, lies beyond us, and in human experience we deal with truths in the form of values. Accordingly the problem of the essence of a religion is purely a problem of valuation, and what is really valuable in Christianity is what is essential. But when we have stated the problem in this form, our difficulties at once begin. The objections against resolving truths entirely into values are weighty, but though we ignore these,

other troubles remain. The subjective and personal aspect of experience is prominent in valuing, and it is notorious that different persons make very different valuations of the same object. So one judges that to be essential in religion which another holds to be of minor importance, and an element which we believe can be discarded with advantage, our neighbour is prepared to maintain at all costs. On this view, then, will not the essence vary with the impression which Christianity makes on the individual consciousness? To put it shortly, Is not all claim to objectivity and general validity sacrificed? Not so, it will be replied. The individual's judgment is not to be taken at its face-value: it must be consistent with the value-judgments of others, and before deciding between various claims we have to consider how the respective values work in society and in history. The values which work permanently will be the essential values. I shall not raise the question here whether, in introducing the idea of 'working,' you are not modifying your principle that truth is altogether determined by value. But, apart from this, it is hard to see that the end you have in view will be reached by the route you have chosen. For elements in religion vary not only in their individual, but also in their collective working-value; and a Christian belief which had pronounced working-value in one epoch may not have it in

another. The apocalyptic idea had great working-value in the Apostolic age, but ere long it ceased to work. Metaphysical conceptions of the person of Christ were all-important in the fourth century, but they have very much less importance in the twentieth. The consequence is, that if one were to strive, by careful historical study, to define certain factors in the Christian faith which have continually approved themselves dominant working-values, he would find it hard to do so. For the historic life varies the emphasis on a belief, and its practical importance for the Christian life undergoes change. If on these lines one were to try to define the elements which constitute the essence of Christianity, he would not reach consistent conclusions which commanded general assent. Here as elsewhere Protestant and Roman Catholic, Liberal and Evangelical, would disagree in their results.

The outcome of our discussions has so far been largely negative. We have not discovered any clear-cut method of solving the problem. A purely historical enquiry will not decide the matter. Speculative theologians have not shown any single idea which is the formative principle of the whole development, and the attempt to gain an objective and universally valid result through the principle of working-value has not succeeded. Perhaps a further study of the con-

ditions of the problem will make plain the reason of this.

We may, I think, take it as established that in the search for the essence we must regard Christianity as a process of development which runs back into the distant past and reaches forward into the future. The aim has been to determine the vital and persisting core of this movement. Why have we failed in doing so? Largely, I suggest, because we have, without realising it, unduly simplified the problem, which is really complex and many-sided. The motto, *simplex sigillum veri*, is not always true, and especially where the problem is a historic one. In this case over-simplification has been twofold, first, in regard to the elements involved in development; and, second, in regard to the nature of the process itself.

1. Christianity, we have insisted, is not a simple whole, but a complex of ideas and beliefs. To simplify by selecting one of these as the vital and germinative principle has not worked in practice, for now one and again another element in the complex has played the dominant part. Nor could an analysis of the factors at work in a given period have enabled us to predict which of them was to fill the foremost place in a future period. Historic movements are highly complicated processes: the future never literally fulfils human

predictions, and often falsifies all our anticipations. In the realm of the spirit there are no exact generalisations, and in history the rule of the scientist, 'once true, always true,' no longer holds. No analysis of the religious elements in a given situation is either precise or exhaustive, so that we can say the future belongs mainly or exclusively to one idea. For no analysis can disclose that secret movement of the spirit which will lift an element from the religious background and enthrone it as a central and dominant force. The changes which pass over human valuations are not predictable, for they are the outcome of the movement of the historic life. Even were people agreed about the essence of Christianity to-day, the men of an earlier day would have returned a different answer to the question; and we have no warrant for believing that the men of a later day will accept our answer. We have then to face the truth that in this regard finished and final conclusions are not within our reach.

2. The tendency to simplify unduly also appears when men come to deal with the character of spiritual development. The analogy of the growth of an organism has been influential, but it has also been misleading. It has favoured the idea that historic development has a typical character, following a determinate course with well-marked stages, and making explicit in the end what was

implicit in the beginning. If the growth of Christianity be interpreted in this way, then its progress is only an explication of what was contained in its origin. But even were the analogy of organic growth a good one, it would not warrant this conclusion. In the case of an organic germ there are characteristics in its growth which are not explained by the nature of the germ, but by that of the environment with which it interacts. And in the spiritual sphere the reaction of a religious system with its cultural and intellectual environment is still more intimate and fruitful. This becomes very apparent if you remember that religion is not a fact in the external world which grows by its own intrinsic resources. If we speak accurately it is not religion which develops, but men as religious beings. For religion is a human experience whose active centre is the mind or soul: it is only a misleading analogy which leads us to speak of it as having a *quasi* existence of its own. Because it is an aspect of the human mind, or rather an activity of the mind, the religious consciousness is in continuous interaction with the other activities of the soul, and is constantly influenced by them. To treat Christianity in abstraction from the personal lives in which it is realised, and to suppose it has some intrinsic and independent power of development, is wrong. The beliefs involved in the religious experience interact

with the scientific, ethical, and philosophical ideas which form other aspects of the same human experience, and it is through this interaction that the religious elements are quickened, modified, and developed. In the case of Christianity it is quite obvious how the cultural, moral, and intellectual environment has influenced its evolution. For instance, the interpretation of Christ's person set forth at the Council of Nicea cannot be understood apart from the impact of Hellenic thought on early Christianity. It is true, of course, that Christianity has an independent character in the sense that it is not to be interpreted arbitrarily by individuals. But this character is not an independent fact endowed with power of development; for there is no capacity of development in mere facts, but only in facts which have become values in living minds. So the past has to be mirrored and interpreted in the life of the present in order to become living and influential. Each age brings something of its own to the interpretation of the Christian religion, and expresses its faith in terms of the values which are immanent in its own life. Only under these conditions can the past, the present, and the future stand in vital relation to one another. Hence the essence of Christianity, regarded as its germinative principle, is not to be extracted from its past simply, for the past in abstraction from the present has no potentialities.

The essence, so conceived, could only expand and unfold itself because it was taken up into and vivified by the life of each successive age, and so quickened to growth by the stimulus of the elements with which it interacts. Just because the religion of Christ develops with the developing life of humanity, so responding to the changing needs of a changing society, the attempt to define its substance by certain unalterable concepts will fail. Indeed there is a sense in which we may hold that the nature of our religion progressively reveals itself in the interpretations it receives from age to age; for the historic judgments-of-value which Christianity has elicited are in the end the responses which it has itself evoked. These varying valuations may each have its relative justification, even as the apparent differences in the contour of a mountain range can be justified because the spectator has been regarding it from diverse points of view, at varying distances, and under changing atmospheric conditions.

An individual soul or a society finds the essence of Christianity in that wherein Christianity makes the deepest and most living appeal to it. That the essence so conceived can be fixed once and for all, we have seen reason to doubt. But is not this, it will be said, a confession that our value-judgments are purely relative? and, if so, how can we rate one value above another? I admit that human

valuations imply some final standard of value as a presupposition, and the effort to make our values consistent and to systematise them rests on this postulate. But the ideal good as postulate we cannot envisage in its concrete fulness, and the most a developing race can expect is a growing insight into the nature of that good. Were it otherwise, human history would not reveal such changes and fluctuations in valuation. And this appears in the varying emphasis which different elements of Christianity receive from the historic life at different stages of its spiritual evolution. What we may believe is, that this momentous development of life and experience brings with it a slowly growing vision of the truth and a consequent progress in our knowledge of the good. Nor may we hope for more so long as we 'see through a glass darkly' and while we 'know in part' only.

This conclusion will seem to some dubious and unsatisfying. We have, it will be said, laid too much stress on the development of Christianity, and have forgotten that there must be something permanent in it. On this theory everything is sacrificed to the devouring principle of change. And, it is argued, if everything changes, how is the continuity of Christian religion maintained? Change is only intelligible in relation to something that abides, and there can be no continuity apart from

an underlying identity. Is there not a danger that this emphasis on change may lead to something like radical Modernism, on the principles of which there is no guarantee that the typical character of the Christian religion will be maintained? These difficulties are not fanciful, and we must try to deal with them.

Here let me begin by referring to the results reached by Troeltsch in the article I have already mentioned. He concludes that the essence ultimately rests on a personal act of valuation, and receives changing expression in the process of spiritual development. In the last resort the essence is not a *datum* but an *ideal*, and through its conception and statement of the ideal the Christianity of each age gives a formative expression of itself. It does so, however, in the form of subjective acts of valuation; and one must ask if this does not identify the essence with the individual interpretations which it receives. To this Troeltsch replies that no doubt a door is here opened to subjectivism, but that subjectivism in any case exists is proved by the existence of diverging interpretations of the essence; and attempts to lay down unalterable norms do not hinder the individual from fixing the norm for himself. In regard to the maintenance of continuity under these conditions, Troeltsch admits that a break in continuity is possible, but denies that it

is likely to occur. As a matter of fact, developments which are incompatible with historic Christianity are sooner or later differentiated from it; and, unless we are prepared to fall back on external authority, there is no ready-made and universally accepted standard by which to secure continuity. The issue of his discussion leaves Troeltsch with a problem on his hands—the problem, namely, how to unify and secure consistency between the personal valuations which express the essence for individual faith and the objective conception of the essence as a formative principle underlying the development of the Christian religion.

In our own discussion we have abandoned the attempt to construe the historic development of Christianity as the expression of one essential idea or germinative principle. For this was to introduce a false simplicity into the problem. On the other hand, we must accept the existence of continuity in Christian development, and, indeed, there would be no development to consider if there were no underlying identity behind the differences which emerge from time to time. Is there, then, any guarantee that valuations of the essence which change will still fall within the limits of spiritual continuity? Can we be reasonably sure that they will be expressions of developing Christian faith rather than violent departures from it? Finally, in the

event of a determination of the essence being inconsistent with historic Christianity, on what grounds are we to treat it as such? The point is one of serious importance, and Troeltsch's answer is not convincing.

That there is a *de facto* continuity in Christianity is not in dispute, and the specific character of the religion is not lost in the course of its evolution. For, despite all differences of spiritual atmosphere and outlook, there is something in the religion of Christ which persists, and which definitely distinguishes it from other religions. However clearly marked off the Christianity of the first century is from that of the Middle Ages, and the latter again from that of modern times, the religion still continues Christian, and is sharply differentiated from Buddhism or Mohammedanism. This distinction is rooted in the character of the Christian experience itself. On the other hand, if you try to fix this persisting and distinctive element or elements as a core which remains impervious to change, you will not succeed. The object of the quest eludes you. The problem is just as intractable as the endeavour to account for the identity of a person by seeking within him an enduring and unalterable substratum. In truth, the only identity of which we have experience instead of resisting changes implies them, and maintains itself in them. And yet, as we all know, there are limits to change,

and if these limits are transcended there is a disruption of continuity. When this boundary is passed in nature the individual organism disintegrates: in the spiritual sphere a religious system, undermined by radical changes within, loses its identity and dissolves. Commonly, however, the conservative instinct, the feeling for continuity in religion, prevents a break with the past. The question is, What are the limiting conditions within which historic Christianity, as a complex of rites and beliefs, may change and the religion still retain its Christian character? The problem here is wider and more general than the problem of the essence; and the point is not what appeals to us as the *essence* of Christianity. It is rather the question of gaining, by an objective historical study, an insight into those broad principles which distinguish the Christian outlook on the world and life—principles whose scope and significance may vary in the course of development, but which are never really abandoned. If we can show that there are such principles, then we shall have shown there is a sufficient reason for the continuity of Christian religion. For the principles in question will guarantee the conservation of a certain typical character. That even here it may be difficult to eliminate altogether subjective valuations I am aware, though the danger is not so great as in the attempt to determine the essence.

The difficulty will be diminished if we try to disabuse our minds of private feelings and philosophical prejudices, and consider the historic phenomena of the Christian religion as dispassionately as possible.

The first and most obvious principle is the intimate connexion of Christianity with Christ. The Christian religion grew out of the life and teaching of Jesus, and for the Christian consciousness God is the Father who is revealed in Christ. Doctrines about Christ have varied, and there has been much dispute in regard to the doctrines to be deemed essential; but Christ Himself keeps a central place in the Christian experience, and the continuity of the Christian faith depends on this. The typical character of the Christian religion is bound up with this principle.

The second principle is, that Christianity is a redemptive religion, for it extends to men a message of deliverance and salvation. Moreover, it is redemptive in a specific sense. Its deliverance is not from the fetters of the body nor from the endless flux of desires: the salvation which Christianity offers is the salvation of the soul from sin. This strongly marked ethical note distinguishes Christian salvation from that of the Mystery-Religions and of Buddhism. Christianity could not lose this ethical and redemptive character without ceasing to be Christian. In point of fact

this characteristic has never been lost, however defective or exaggerated the doctrines may have been by which theologians have sought to formulate its essential meaning. If the gospel of the future were simply a gospel of duty and goodwill, then whatever value it might possess it would none the less have broken with historic Christianity. The feeling of the need for atonement, however you may state the fact in the form of doctrine, has always marked the Christian temper and outlook.

The third principle which characterises Christianity is, that it is a religion which postulates a transcendent world wherein man's ultimate destiny lies. The goal of the human spirit does not fall within the present mundane system: it is not Here but Yonder. Life has its consummation in 'another world' for which this world is a test and a discipline. The redemptive process, taking form on earth in a Kingdom of God, comes to its fulness and fruition in the Kingdom of Heaven. This transcendent note, as we may call it, runs through the whole development of the Christian religion, receiving changing expression and drawing colour from the spirit of the time, yet never lost. In one age it appeared as an almost fanatical 'otherworldliness' which filled men with contempt for this world and its affairs. In another age we find the transcendent world brought into intimate relation with the present world, so giving deeper

value to this life and its relationships. Nevertheless the truth remains that you cannot eliminate this transcendent element without disrupting the continuity of the Christian religion. There are some idealists who think this reference to the supramundane realm should be treated as purely symbolical and figurative, for the substantial truth is the immanence of the ideal world in the actual. There is no 'other world' if we speak strictly, there is only the ideal truth of this world. Such a theory, to my mind, leaves unsolved some of the most urgent problems of human experience. But the point is, that this interpretation of religion parts company from the Christianity of history and substitutes for it an idealistic speculation. The Christian religion cannot be divorced from faith in immortality: from the Christian outlook on life there is never absent a consciousness that 'here we have no continuing city,' but 'we seek one to come.'

I shall be asked, How do you differentiate these permanent and typical principles, the presence of which ensures religious continuity, from the essence of Christianity? For in a sense, of course, they are essential. In the main I reply, because the principles are general, and, if you like, formal, while the essence is living, concrete, and spiritual. Let me explain what I mean. For instance, the broad principle of reference to Christ has to take a

specific form for the Christian consciousness: it must be represented in a definite way by the believer ere it can be reckoned to belong to the essence of his religious experience. St. Paul might have defined it as a being 'in Christ' or as 'risen with Christ.' The point is that the general principle must be clothed with the flesh and blood of religious experience, ere it can become a quick and active thing. In the same way, the redemptive principle has to assume a specific form in relation to the individual's consciousness of sin in his experience. The essence of the Christian religion, which is reflected in the spiritual experience of a man or a society, is always envisaged in terms of value, and stands for what is felt to be deepest and most vital in the Christian faith. That which appeals to us most in the gospel we deem its essential message. So the essence is expressed differently, yet the differences must fall within the unity of the Christian religion, and be consistent with its historic continuity.

It now only remains for us to gather up the results of the discussion. The continuity of Christianity as a specific form of the religious experience is assured by the presence within it of certain general principles. These principles have received varying expression and emphasis at different stages of development, yet Christianity could not abandon any of them without losing its

typical character. Within the framework of these principles the Christian faith has realised itself in a living and growing complex of beliefs, doctrines, and rites. To separate out from these a more vital core, which you term the Essence of Christianity, is possible, and in modern times it has been done. But there has been no universal agreement about the results gained by this method. The conception of the essential has varied during the evolution of Christianity, for it has been mirrored in the changing medium of the historic life. Nor is it possible to reach a more stable result by trying to determine the germinative principle of Christian development. For that development has not been governed by any single germinal idea in process of expansion. What we really have is a complex of beliefs interacting with the life and thought of different ages, and the actual facts of the development cannot be understood apart from this interaction.

The Essence is therefore not to be defined in the form of something objective, unvarying, and final. What each age finds most deep and moving in the complex whole of Christian faith, that it declares to be essential Christianity. This judgment of value has a relative justification: it expresses the essential meaning of Christianity for the life and thought of the age. If any one demurs that this is not enough, we invite him to

show by a study of the relevant facts that he is entitled to go further. What we do see is, that the onward-moving historic life brings with it fresh valuations, and the essence is stated in other terms. For there is no absolute fixity in human values, nor indeed can be so long as human life and experience are in process of development. That ideal Good, which is the ground and measure of all values, is not to be defined fully and finally at a given point in time, and a growing knowledge of it is only possible through a growing experience. As we know more, we are able to organise our values better. But if the widening and deepening experience of an ageing world is the manifestation of a Divine purpose; if, as we believe, it is a Divine discipline and education; we may surely cherish the conviction that the things which are vital in the Christian religion will stand out more and more clearly to the spiritual vision of mankind.

X

RELIGION AND THE SUPERNATURAL

DURING last century a growing current of thought adverse to the supernatural in religion made itself felt. The attitude of thinkers to the miraculous became harder and less sympathetic. Appearing first among scientific men, this tendency by and by reflected itself in popular thought, and it was sometimes deemed a mark of superior culture to disbelieve in miracles. This trend of opinion was not without influence on theologians. The proof from miracles ceased to figure in the forefront of the apologist's defence of Christianity, and the limitations of the argument were better realised: in some cases the miraculous was explained away, in others it was minimised. On the whole this impact of hostile opinion on the methods of the older theology was not without benefit to the latter. It forced religious thinkers to reconsider the conception of miracle, and it led them to abandon the theory that the function of miracle was merely to furnish evidence for the truth of Christianity. The disposition to recog-

nise that miracle implies faith rather than creates it increased; and few would now contend that a miracle can guarantee the truth of a doctrine. As Matthew Arnold once said, though he changed his pen into a penwiper, this would not make what he was writing any more convincing. Nor would any one now defend the circular argument which finds an assurance of miracles in revelation, and then infers the reality of revelation because it is attested by miracles.

But while the apologist of the miraculous is more modest in his claim and more careful in stating his case, he has to address an audience less well-affected than in former days. Matthew Arnold, writing more than a generation ago, declared that a great many persons "have made up their minds that what is popularly called miracle never does really happen."[1] And I fancy we may conclude that most of these people had made no special study of the subject, but merely expressed a common prejudice. The belief has spread that miracle, like legend, belongs to an age and habit of thought which the world has outgrown, just as the mature man has outgrown the beliefs of his childhood. Miracles are natural at an early stage of human culture, and it is only to be expected that tales of the kind should be interwoven with the origins of Christianity: their

[1] *Vide* "The Proof from Miracles," in *Literature and Dogma.*

absence would be more remarkable than their presence. The rank growth of such beliefs can be easily understood, if we remember that they are the product of a time when there was no scientific conception of nature and its order. How few miracles, it is urged, will bear the test of a scientific scrutiny! A contemporary theologian concludes that in view of our scientific presuppositions we are justified in adopting "a rather sceptical attitude to immediate divine interpositions in external nature."[1] Another and more radical critic declares that the miraculous does not fit the world as experience presents it, and believes that "the educated world is in a fair way to outgrow miracles."[2] Hence the opinion is general that it is uncritical and unscientific to accept miracles, and thus many are ready to assume that, when the evidence for any particular miracle is adequately tested, it will be found to break down.

I shall not now raise the question whether this attitude does not reveal as much prejudice as the attitude against which it protests. Our present concern is to appreciate the elements in modern thought which have engendered this hostility to the supernatural. Speaking broadly we may, I think, signalise two influences which have helped to undermine faith in miracles.

[1] D. C. Macintosh, *Theology as an Empirical Science*, p. 203.
[2] R. Sellars, *The Next Step in Religion*, pp. 135, 137.

1. The first of these is the growth of historic knowledge and criticism. One of the significant facts of last century was the rise of the comparative study of religions and the application of critical methods to the examination of religious origins. This led to a far better understanding of the mental atmosphere which invested the beginnings of religions, as well as the motives and influences which contributed to their development. The result of the new insight has been the revision of many old opinions. We know now that primitive beliefs and impressions were naive and uncriticised, and ideas of a uniform order to which events must conform were absent. Nature was instinctively construed on an animistic basis, its powers were believed to be subject to magical control, and imagination saw spirits at work everywhere. The soil of early culture was excellently adapted to the growth of myth and legend, and the crop was luxuriant, while miracle was a common occurrence. A comparative study of old religions, national as well as tribal, discloses miracle everywhere interwoven with their structure. Miracles were expected: they provoked no criticism, and were not a stumbling-block to faith. But if these alleged miracles are discredited now because they are the product of a time when men had no clear idea of the order of nature and the principles of evidence, can we decline to apply the same criticism to the

miracles of the Old and the New Testament? For is it not apparent that the writers shared the same heritage of naive beliefs? The question was naturally provoked by the comparative study of religions, a study which had brought to light points of contact between the Hebrew and Christian religions and the ethnic religions. Here the Higher Criticism of the Biblical documents made its voice heard. It pointed out how the traditional ideas about the origin of these documents must be drastically revised, and showed that for the most part they could not be taken as contemporary evidence for the events they narrated. They are, indeed, witnesses to the tradition which had gradually grown up, but they may well contain mistakes and misunderstandings in its transmission. At the best they are a record of floating beliefs rather than a record of facts. This plausible argument certainly leaves something unexplained; but it does contain elements of truth, and it influences many. In virtue of it people find it possible to relegate the whole of the Biblical miracles to the realm of myth. For instance, the late Professor Huxley came to the conclusion that "there is not to be found in all history any miracle attested by a sufficient number of men of such unquestioned goodness, education, and learning, as to secure us against all delusion in themselves."[1]

[1] *Collected Works*, vol. v. p. 197.

On this view the problem of miracles is in the main the psychological problem of showing how the belief in them grew up. For miracle is "the dearest child of faith," and for faith "all things are possible."

2. The second influence has been the development of the scientific conception of nature. That conception has taken a more and more definite form as the outcome of the application of the principles and methods of science to the interpretation and manipulation of physical forces. Primitive man had seen in the world around him powers and energies analogous to the human will—powers capricious in their operation though amenable to control by magical means. He had no notion of a necessary connexion of phenomena and an inherent order of things; for him anything might be the cause of anything. This primitive animism has left survivals in language and mental habits, but the system itself has gradually disintegrated under the solvent of scientific thinking: like the realm of fairyland, it lies remote from the world in which the modern man lives and acts. Science has wrought this revolution by gradually depersonalising nature: for the agency of spirits it has substituted the operation of impersonal substances and causes, energies and laws. In place of explanation through some individual activity, it has sought to interpret phenomena through some

principle which is universal in its working. The chief category which the natural sciences employ is that of causality, and the category is of fundamental importance. *Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas*; for by this knowledge man harnesses the forces of nature and sets them to work in his service. The cause from the standpoint of practical science is always some element in the given situation which is directly active in bringing about the effect, and the two stand in mechanical and quantitative relations to each other. When the scientific man discovers a cause he treats it as a universal, something which under given conditions always produces the same result. Thus friction always generates heat, heat of a certain intensity always causes water to boil, and steam always exercises mechanical energy. The operation of generalised causes is then subsumed under the concept of natural laws which are supposed to act in a given sphere with mechanical regularity. The notion of law is extended to the whole of nature: nature thus becomes the domain of inflexible laws, and there is no room in it for the arbitrary and contingent. Order and constancy are the notes of nature and the pledge of its reliability. It is intelligible that those who accept this view should be chary of admitting any conception of the supernatural that would involve the interruption or suspension of the natural order. For to

them it seems a reversion to that naive and uncritical idea of the world which modern science has done so much to discredit. Supernaturalism was suited to the times of man's ignorance, but there is no place for it in the age of knowledge: it is a survival of the past, destined ere long to disappear. Scientists, no doubt, are ignorant of the causes of many phenomena, but it does not follow that these causes are supernatural; and time and again men of science have found that effects once deemed supernatural are explicable in terms of natural causality. A miracle so called only challenges thought to find its explanation: as miracle in the absolute sense there is no room for it in the scientific scheme of things.

It has been pointed out, and quite fairly, that the scientific conception of nature has radically altered the significance of miracle. For the modern man miracle, defined by contrast with permanent laws of nature, becomes something very different from what it appeared to races destitute of the elements of scientific knowledge. The Biblical miracles, for instance, belong to an age when the notion of determinate laws of nature did not exist, and plainly they could not mean for an individual then what they mean for us now. That the sun should stand still in the course of a battle was a sign or portent to the ancient Hebrew, yet one which he could believe to be real: to us, who know

what it implies, it is incredible. Projected against the background of uniform laws of nature which it is supposed to contradict, miracle becomes something far more wonderful than an unusual occurrence to which religious value is attached. The evidential or apologetic value of the two conceptions is by no means identical. The point to bear in mind is, that the idea of a 'violation of the laws of nature' is a modern theory of miracle, and in the case of the Biblical miracles we should not read this idea into the narratives. The consequence of this fusion of naive and pseudo-scientific notions is that miracle, as Höffding has remarked, has become a kind of hybrid conception. Hence the miraculous has acquired a significance which it certainly did not originally possess: on the other hand, belief in the miraculous so defined is now much more difficult. It is one thing to believe in the act of a higher power which is manifested within nature though it does not conflict with it: it is another thing to suppose that some inherent law or principle of the natural world has been annulled or transgressed.

The present situation in regard to miracle is largely the outcome of the two movements we have been considering. The body of opinion created by science and historical criticism is, we have seen, adverse on the whole to the belief that there is an intrusion of the supernatural into the natural order.

In quite recent times the voice of science, when it delivers itself on this topic, has grown less aggressive; but in the main the facts are as I have stated them. The pressure of this tendency has made itself felt in the religious sphere. Theologians of an advanced type often frankly abandon the miraculous in the traditional sense: they treat it as the product of the mythical spirit which is ever active in early culture and dominates the lower stages of the religious consciousness. Its presence in modern religion is a survival, interesting, no doubt, yet devoid of any rational justification and doomed ere long to disappear. Theologians of a more conservative type, though unwilling to discard miracle, are inclined to minimise the sphere of its operation and to make concessions in the case of particular miracles. For instance, they would concede that many of the miracles in the Old Testament are probably legendary, but they would refuse to admit this with regard to the miracles of Jesus. The perplexity and uncertainty which beset the subject are apparent in divided opinions about the place and value of miracles in the Christian system. Some are prepared to maintain that the miraculous is not an integral element of the Christian faith; others contend that the acceptance of miracle is essential in a Christian, and were the belief generally abandoned it would mean a break in the historic continuity of the Christian

religion. The trouble is aggravated by the lack of any clear and universally accepted definition of miracle. One person may reject miracle defined as a violation of natural law, but admit it in the sense of an extraordinary occurrence not explicable by known causes. Another says any reference to natural law is irrelevant, and supposes an event miraculous if it has a very specific religious value. This confusion and division of opinion furnish a reason for another discussion of a rather time-worn topic.

In making some observations on this theme, let me begin by saying that the attitude of theologians on this subject is not always consistent. Sometimes they fail to realise the precise effects of the arguments they employ. For instance, an American theologian speaks of miracles as deviations from the ordinary course of nature due to the personal agency of God—deviations which revealed the good purpose of God and gained credence for the gospel.[1] Yet it is not easy to see how these deviations should greatly influence those who had little or no idea of the order of nature, and who were perfectly ready to attribute 'signs and wonders' to diabolic agency. We cannot read the mental outlook of our own age into an earlier age, nor suppose the psychological

[1] G. P. Fisher, *Grounds of Theistic and Christian Belief*, pp. 107–108.

impression produced by miracles would be the same in both. Moreover, there is the question of the spiritual value of the faith engendered by external marvels. Again, the conservative theologian, while using arguments to prove the general possibility of miracles, yet restricts the operation of the miraculous to the sphere of special revelation, and credits it with the function of commending that revelation. Ostensible miracles associated with other religions than the Christian he relegates to the domain of myth and legend, of which the religions of the Gentiles have apparently the monopoly. The orthodox Protestant thinks that the miracles recorded in the Old and New Testaments are true, but supposes that miracles suddenly ceased at the close of the Apostolic age. If he is asked to explain this, he will probably reply that they ceased because they were no longer necessary. Yet if their office was to commend the faith to a careless or unbelieving world, it would be impossible to show that they were not urgently needed in later times. The Roman Catholic takes a wider view: he thinks that miracles continue to flourish under the ægis of the developing Church, which is an institution divinely guided and inspired. Nevertheless, the follower of Rome will not admit the occurrence of miracles outside the pale of the true Church, or if he does admit it, he traces it to demoniac agency.

Even here there is a limitation of the scope of the miraculous which is not easy to defend; for the general arguments in favour of miracle are not in line with this deliberate restriction of its sphere. In fact, we shall see afterwards, any conception of miracle that can be plausibly defended will have a much wider bearing on nature and history than that which is suggested by the traditional theology. The position of the Christian apologist would be stronger and his attitude less exposed to criticism, if he frankly admitted that the action of the supernatural is not to be trammelled by the bounds of a church or an age.

The need for a theory of miracle never troubled the naive mind: only when men have formed some idea of the course of nature, and been impressed by its orderly character, do they become concerned to know how the unusual and extraordinary can find a place within it. To define or explain miracle, or defend its possibility, was remote from the minds of the writers of the New Testament. For nature, as they saw it, imposed no harsh restrictions on miracle. But when the outlines of a religious philosophy began to develop, the existence of a problem became apparent. The first Christian writer whose remarks on the subject are valuable is Augustine. At the outset he draws an important distinction: miracle is not contrary to nature in itself, but only to nature as

we know it. Events which happen within the world fall into two classes, the first due to causes inherent in nature, and the second due to causes hid in God—*semina occulta*. The former might include the wonderful, events which for the religious mind had the value of miracle, but they would not be miracles in the strict sense. The term miracle, therefore, properly applies to the latter, because they depend directly on the action of a supra-natural power. Accordingly, divine action through secondary causes in nature is not miracle, the title being reserved for cases of immediate divine agency. The same distinction between an order of nature known to us and the order of nature as a whole, reappears in Thomas Aquinas. On this basis he differentiates objective from subjective miracles. Miracle in the objective sense transcends the order of nature as a whole—in other words, it cannot be explained through the sum of mundane causes and conditions. A subjective miracle is an event we cannot explain through causes in nature which are known to us. The Thomist conception of objective miracle has retained its place in Roman Catholic theology.

It will be noted that Thomas Aquinas did not clear up the difficulty of the way in which an objective miracle is related to the determinate purpose of God revealed in nature and history.

On this point Leibniz afterwards brought his remarkable speculative powers to bear. His own theory of development was deterministic: evolution was really explication of what already was contained in germ, and there was no room for contingency or intrusion from without. Accordingly he set aside the notion that miracle can be construed as an arbitrary interference of God with the order of nature, and substitutes for it the idea of a wonderful event, but an event which is none the less a predetermined act of God, and was bound up with the development of things from the beginning. This reminds us of Augustine's *semina occulta*, or reasons hid in God, which come to fruit at their appointed time. On this theory there is no break in the strict continuity of development, a thing Leibniz could not consistently admit, and miracle was a predetermined element in the divinely ordered universe. But this conception does not distinguish clearly a miracle from the body of events in the universe which are also divinely determined. The other suggestion of Leibniz, that in miracle God perhaps suspends the immanent law of the individual or monad, and so is responsible for the emergence of something not explicable through the inherent constitution of things, gives to miracle a specific and distinguishable character. But it is plain that he could only have urged this theory at the

expense of his principle of a strictly continuous development.

The objections to defining miracle in a way which implies a breach of continuity in the natural order have been felt by many thinkers after Leibniz. And this has led them to adopt a conception of the miraculous which leaves the determinate order of nature intact. Some theologians have thought that the specific character of miracle lay in the religious value which attached to it. Consequently an event with a definite religious value would be miraculous, though its emergence could be traced to the operation of mundane causes. Schleiermacher, for instance, has given expression to this view. Any event, he says, becomes miraculous when its religious value is dominant. In his *Reden* he remarks: "In the interests of religion the necessity can never arise of regarding an event as taken out of its connexion with nature in consequence of its dependence on God." On this view from the objective standpoint no single incident can be said to be more miraculous than another; and if any event is regarded as a miracle, it can only be on the ground of the subjective impression it produces and the consequent religious value it receives. The conception is in harmony with the presupposition that nature and its uniformities are the expression of the immanent activity of God;

and it is assumed that the unbroken dependence of nature on God, which is disclosed in the uniform working of all its parts, is the only mode of God's activity in nature which religion requires. This interpretation leaves no room for faith in the action of the transcendent God, in virtue of which He brings events to pass which are not explicable in terms of the mundane system of causes. Whether religion really demands such activity of the transcendent God is, of course, a point on which something remains to be said.

The theory before us seeks to conserve the rigid continuity of the natural order at the cost of refining or reducing the notion of the miraculous. Very different is the theory which frankly defines miracle as a "violation of the laws of nature." This definition has been frequently given, and, it will be remembered, was the one adopted by Hume, and used by him to discredit the supernatural by an appeal to experience. The weight of evidence against any such violation will always, he urged, far exceed the evidence for it; and so the testimony of experience in every case turns the scale decisively against miracle. Hume's argument is acute, but, unfortunately for his case, it proves too much. If the amount of experience is the sole factor in determining our judgment, then no doubt miracles do not happen, for *ex hypothesi* they are rare events. Surely the character

and quality of the evidence fall to be reckoned as well as the quantity. You do not reach the truth of necessity by counting heads; and if the bulk of experience is all that matters, then men would have been justified in disbelieving a great deal which they have afterwards learned to be true. At one time experience emphatically negatived the assertion that men could fly through the air or speak with another through miles of intervening space; and yet facts for which there was formerly no experience—therefore on Hume's premises to be denied the status of facts—are now common facts of daily life. The truth is that experience is a constantly changing and growing quantity, and yields no absolute test of what is possible and what is not. Every advance in science opens out fresh possibilities, and extends and enriches the body of human knowledge. The true inference from the evidence of experience is, that we should examine carefully the testimony for any alleged deviation from it: in itself experience gives us no warrant for saying that a particular event could never have taken place.

Hume prejudices the case for miracle by the way in which he defines it. Moreover, the definition is arbitrary and involves some confusion of thought; for the notion of a violation of law does not properly describe anything that can happen in nature, and rests on assumptions which are not

justified. We can speak of human laws being broken, for these laws function as norms for the well-being of society: they do not tell us what is, but what ought to be, and so can be obeyed or disobeyed. But to read the analogy of human law into nature is misleading, and it does not rightly construe the facts. 'Laws of nature' are not independent principles which govern nature in their own right, and determine the course of things by their own power. They are simply generalised statements of the behaviour of phenomena, and have no existence apart from the phenomena. Gravitation, for example, is expressed in a generalised statement of the behaviour of material bodies in relation to one another: it is nothing apart from bodies which gravitate, and where there is no matter there is no gravitation. Nor is the so-called law a causal explanation of the phenomena in question. The analogy of human law is here defective, and to speak of things being constrained to obey laws is a very ambiguous expression. For what in the case of nature can be violated? Certainly not some independent norm. If we consider the matter all that a so-called violation of law means is, that in a given case there has been a deviation from an observed uniformity in the acting of nature. A generalisation referring to a particular class of phenomena turns out not to hold true in some specific instance. It

is also implied that we cannot explain this lapse from the general rule by causes operating within the system of nature: otherwise the event would be unusual but not miraculous. This inability to assign a cause is often due to our defective knowledge; as the result of further examination the cause may be assigned, or, it may be, the action of a known cause has been modified by some other cause, thus bringing about a result which was not expected. Such deviations from uniformity would not, we repeat, be termed miraculous. There remain, of course, events in plenty which have hitherto defied scientific explanation, and for which no sufficient cause in nature can be given. Now, is the scientific observer entitled to assume that, were the lacunæ in his knowledge filled up, every such event would be brought within the domain of scientific interpretation and be fitted into a place within the causal series of nature? Those who say this, and many are disposed to do so, are really going on a hypothesis and not on a logical inference from the facts. The hypothesis is, that nature forms a closed system of interacting causes and effects, and every event which occurs in nature must in the end be traced to the working of this system. This assumption is often tacitly made, yet it eminently requires to be examined. For if this presupposition is justified, there can be no occurrence within the order of nature

which is directly due to an agency that transcends nature.

No doubt some countenance has been given to this hypothesis by philosophical thinkers. One recalls the Kantian conception of nature as a strictly ordered whole in space and time—a whole organised and connected in its parts by the synthetic activity of mind, yet so constituted that it is only to be interpreted and understood through the categories of science. For Kant the law of necessary connexion in nature, though it is somehow made possible by the synthetic ego, still precludes any method of explaining an event in nature save through its relation to other elements in the natural order. He postulated, it is true, a noumenal or transcendent world in which freedom reigned, but he really left no room for an agency in the noumenal world to bring about effects within the definitely determined series of causes and effects in nature. So the Kantian philosophy ends in a dualism between the two worlds, the world of nature and the world of freedom, which was never overcome. The Hegelian idealism did away with this dualism, for it made thought the indwelling and organising principle of nature and dispensed with the futile notion of the 'thing in itself.' But if nature was in substance spiritual, the movement of the spirit was still rigidly determined and excluded contingency.

Nature on this theory was not the self-contained system which naturalism represents it to be: it was an element, or rather an abstract aspect, of the larger spiritual organism of the universe. But within this concrete whole or system everything was conditioned and determined by its relation to other things: no transcendent cause could act on nature, there could only be the immanent divine causality which was one with the order of nature. Though the universe was spiritual, it was spiritual in a sense which left no place for miracle. This vindication of the primacy of the spirit has been held by some theologians to be sufficient for religion, and they have rejected the idea of a transcendent causality because it appeared to rest on a deistic view of the relation of God to the world. Pfleiderer, for instance, frankly endorses the spiritual view of the world, but carefully distinguishes it from the supernatural. Ordinary supernaturalism, he holds, fails to recognise that the will of God is one with the order of nature: in other words, the 'laws of nature' are the rational form of the divine activity. Hence any suspension or interference with the natural order would be irrational, and so-called 'new beginnings' are based on the law and order of the world as a whole. Before accepting this view one should consider what it implies. If there is no preferential action on the part of God but only action in

strictly determined ways, if He only acts in and through the natural order but cannot act upon it, or initiate new movements within it, does this conception not empty theism of spiritual value and logically lead to pantheism? And if we deny the possibility of a supernatural action of God on the world, can we consistently admit His supernatural action on the human soul?

After the criticisms we have made, and from the results we have reached, it will be possible to state more clearly the meaning we attach to the word 'miracle.' We reject as misleading any definition of miracle which involves a contrast and opposition to the so-called 'laws of nature.' Nor do we assert an event to be miraculous which is produced by natural causes, even though it be invested with a special religious value. A miracle, we hold, is not brought about by any or all of the immanent causes operating within the mundane system, but is due to the operation of some transcendent cause. Every occurrence so caused is, if we may speak strictly, supernatural; but when the occurrence is very familiar it would not, in common parlance, be termed a miracle. *Quod crebro videt non miratur* is true of the ordinary man, who does not associate the miraculous with the customary. And there is a justification for this because, from the religious point of view, miracle must always have a definite religious significance and value. If we make these

qualifications, we might describe a miracle as an uncommon event, incapable of explanation by natural causes, and possessing a definite religious value. The determining element in miracle, however, is the necessary reference of it to a transcendent causality.

In our further discussion we have to consider two questions—questions which it is important to distinguish and fatal to confuse. There is first the problem of the possibility of miracle in the sense defined, and second, there is the question of the reality or genuineness of certain alleged miracles. A negative conclusion on the general issue will carry with it the denial of the reality of any specific miracle however well-attested it may seem to be. But although the possibility of miracle be established, the authenticity of any particular miracle does not necessarily follow. It is the former problem that I wish to discuss more fully in the remainder of this paper, and I shall content myself with a very few remarks on the latter. Logically I ought to begin with the possibility of miracle, but as I only intend to make one or two remarks on the other topic, I may perhaps be allowed to do so now.

1. If we assume for the moment that miracle is possible, then the acceptance of a specific claim to miracle is a matter of evidence and intrinsic probability. I may add that under 'intrinsic

probability' I would include a consideration of the spiritual justification of the alleged miracle in the given historic situation. In dealing with the evidence we shall have to examine the documents in which the report is contained as well as the opportunities of knowledge open to the writers. If the critic concludes that the belief in a recorded miracle must have a foundation in fact, he has still to consider whether the fact may not have been a natural occurrence which was construed as a miracle. He has also to investigate the consistency of the narrative, the existence of supplementary evidence, and, in cases where there is more than one account, the presence of discrepancies in the reports. The application of these principles to religious miracles in detail yields very diverse results. Some claims to miracle are well attested and others very badly: in one instance there is insuperable difficulty in accepting the story, and in another much difficulty in rejecting it. Few would now care to deny that the evidence for a good many Biblical miracles is not sufficient to be convincing, while for others the evidence is much stronger. Yet this method of balancing evidences in specific cases has its limitations. A person with a bias against miracle is as likely as not to remain unconvinced after a review of the testimony for miracles. Nor is it apparent that any great spiritual gain must follow a verdict for miracles

reached after the manner of a trial before a jury. Moreover, it would be a mistake to deny the title of Christian to one in spiritual sympathy with Christ, who could not accept certain miraculous narratives in the New Testament. The theologian Richard Rothe was a firm believer in miracles, yet his attitude to those who found the difficulty of belief insuperable was tolerant. "I am not," he declared, "to be intimidated by the term 'laws of nature,'" but he added, "I do not wish to impose this faith in miracles upon you. Are you not able to accept them? Well, then, let them alone." In the end I think it will be found that scepticism about the reality of a particular miracle is frequently not an irresistible conclusion from the character of the evidence, but rather proceeds from some general assumptions against the possibility of the miraculous. It is not always so, for the narrative of a miracle sometimes creates grave doubts in an unprejudiced mind; and in certain cases the intrinsic probability in its favour is so slight as to be negligible. At the same time, I think it cannot be denied that, where these assumptions are present, they inevitably incline the individual to magnify every element of weakness in the testimony at the expense of the other elements. It becomes of much importance, therefore, to decide the general question of the possibility of miracle.

2. Here let me emphasise at the outset the truth, that a religious faith which is definitely theistic cannot do without the supernatural in some form. An individual may be sincerely pious who does not believe that God interferes with the order of nature in reply to human desires and petitions. But he cannot consistently suppose that God's dealings with the souls of men are bound by a rigid and mechanical necessity which excludes a free response to their inner needs and preferential action. If the relations of a living God to finite spirits are mechanised in this fashion, then elements of essential religious value are entirely lost. If the quickening power of divine grace in a human soul were a mechanically determined process, what personal and spiritual significance could attach to it? Theistic religion, which is rooted in the fact of personal communion between the human and the divine, cannot eliminate the supernatural element: to do so means a relapse into pantheism, which has no room for a personal fellowship between man and God. The true issue of this line of thought is the transformation of the religious idea of God into the metaphysical idea of the immanent and impersonal principle of unity in the universe.

If it be granted that the commerce of finite spirits with God, and the response of God to their needs, are supernatural processes, can we

consistently admit the presence of the supernatural here and yet deny the possibility of its manifestation within the natural order? To do so would mean that nature excludes that direct agency of God which is realised in the realm of the spirit. The one sphere is open to a form of divine activity which is closed to it in the other. Now if we frankly take the standpoint of theism, and conceive God to be the transcendent ground of both the natural and the spiritual worlds, this is a kind of limitation or disability which it is very hard to accept. As we have seen already, this imports a form of dualism into the universe which it is hard to justify, especially when we remember that elements of the natural and spiritual fuse and blend in the personal life of men. A rigid separation of the two spheres becomes impracticable in face of the patent facts of experience. If this be so, it will require very cogent reasons to convince us that God can exercise an initiative in the kingdom of souls which He cannot exercise in the realm of nature. Do the facts of the natural order compel us to this conclusion?

The scientific conception of nature, as we noted previously, is often supposed to yield this inference, but we found that the inference was not really derived from the study of the phenomena of nature: it was based on a general assumption or hypothesis about nature. The assumption was

that the order of nature formed a closed system of interacting causes and effects, and that every event within the system was entirely conditioned by it. On this hypothesis any direct reference of an event within nature to a cause which transcends nature must be rejected. Is this hypothesis an admissible one?[1] One difficulty which at once meets us if we make this assumption, is the difficulty of reconciling it with the free causality of human wills bringing about effects in the natural world. No ingenuity can prove to me that the specific exercise of my causality on nature can be explained as the product of natural causes and conditions. It is possible, perhaps, to show that the energy of the system of nature has some relation to the development of vital energy. But between the mechanical and quantitative forces attributed to the natural system and the purposive activity of the human will there is an impassable chasm. Here is a μετάβασις εἰς ἄλλο γένος. Accordingly no scientist pretends to prove that a given event due to an act of volition can be fitted into and

[1] It may be well to point out how far-reaching the assumption is. Science can only deal with a limited portion of nature. Within this portion the mechanical-causal mode of interpretation gives results which are practically useful, but there remains a great deal—the qualitative differences of things, for example—which cannot be interpreted in this way. To claim that a principle, partial in its application and confessedly incomplete in its interpretation of things, is a fundamental principle of the whole universe, is rash and unwarranted.

exhibited as an element in the naturally determined series of causes and effects. At most he will insist that, though proof in any specific case is impossible in the present state of knowledge, still man who is a being within nature must be mechanically determined like other natural objects. Here, however, he is in conflict with our fundamental consciousness of spontaneity, and can offer no real explanation of the facts of the moral consciousness. Any theory of the universe which is to maintain itself must leave room for human freedom. And to admit freedom is to admit the presence of a principle of spontaneity in virtue of which new beginnings are possible that are not the inevitable outcome of what has gone before. The consequence may be that the philosophical thinker finds it necessary to revise the scientific conception of nature; to deny that the mechanical theory is more than a provisional one which works up to a point, but is not ultimately true; and to infer that the so-called material order is at root allied to the spiritual. This, however, is a large problem into which I shall not enter just now. It is enough to have pointed out that there are facts of experience with which the notion of nature as a rigid mechanism is inconsistent. Perhaps we shall also find that the actual procedure of science in dealing with causes does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that nature is a closed system of causes.

Our minds require that there should be continuity in experience: man must find order and connexion in the experienced world if he is to be at home in it and do his work in it. This order we express for ourselves by tracing effects to causes, and these causes in turn to other causes. The demand for continuity is involved in the character of the mind, for which the incoherent is the unintelligible. But the postulate of continuity does not carry with it any determination of the specific kind of continuity which is to exist: this must be learned from experience. That water exposed to a temperature of 32° Fahr. will begin to freeze is a particular relation of cause and effect, and we only come to know it by observation. The same is true of all specific causal connexions in the natural world. Given an effect we assume a cause, but the specific cause must be ascertained by observation and experiment. To refer an event to a cause is in popular language to explain it; in reality it falls far short of this. The effect and the cause are always elements in a complex situation, and the slightest examination shows that the action of the cause implies the presence of other contributory conditions. The pressure of the finger on the trigger of a gun will only produce an explosion if the lock is in order, the cap in its place, the cartridge charged, and the powder dry. How complex the contributory conditions are in any

given case we cannot say, and causal explanation never yields a single agent as the sufficient ground of the effect. These manifold contributory conditions, positive and negative, the scientific observer neglects as irrelevant to the purpose on hand, and selects the most prominent as the cause. Hence the maxim, *causa æquat effectum* is never actually justified by science, for no analysis of the effect suffices to show that it proceeds from one cause and one only. The generalised proposition, if A then B, is an abstraction, practically useful no doubt, but still an abstraction; for A is never defined as the complete and sufficient ground of B. Suppose we reverse the proposition, as we ought to be able to do were the cause equal to the effect, then we are confronted with the difficulty of the so-called plurality of causes. The movement of a wheel might be due to the pressure of steam on a piston, to the impact of falling water, or to the energy exerted by human hands, but the mere examination of the effect will not decide between these alternatives. Hence despite our experience that the effect B is associated with a causal factor A, we are not in a position to say that B cannot possibly emerge without the presence of A. In other words, there is nothing in the actual procedure of science which would warrant the conclusion that, if an event B is alleged to have happened, and no element in the mundane causal system can be

assigned as the productive agent, then the event cannot have happened. That an individual who died was restored to life may seem highly improbable in face of the general experience that dead persons are not so restored. But we cannot dogmatically affirm that it is impossible, so long as we are not able to prove there is no power in the universe which could bring about this effect. The testimony of experience, when it relates to the continuous existence of a uniformity, only yields probability, not necessity.

The chief objection to the idea of an intrusion of the supernatural into the natural order is the assumption to which I have referred more than once—the assumption that nature forms an interconnected, enclosed, and rigidly determined system of causes and effects. But the procedure of natural science fails to justify this hypothesis. When all is said, the alleged necessity in nature is no more than the observed uniformity in the connexion of given elements; and on this basis the mind goes on to suppose the cause brings about the effect, and the effect proceeds from the cause, by some intrinsic necessity.[1] Proceeding

[1] Kant's theory signally fails to explain how the mind can impose a principle of necessary connexion in time on things, which, as he himself admits, are not ultimately created by the mind. Moreover, on his view the *a priori* constitution of mind requires causal connexion in experience, but is powerless to explain how specific causes are conjoined with specific effects. Yet coherency in our

on this supposition the man of science treats the causal series which he traces in the world as necessary, each element being determined by the preceding element. But even then he always has to break short the series with an element which is contingent. Let A,B,C,D, a,b,c,d, and $\alpha,\beta,\gamma,\delta$ represent causal sequences discovered by science. Then even on his own showing the first members of these series, *i.e.* A, a, α, remain contingent and not necessary. If the scientist succeeded in proving that A was caused by M, then M in that case would be given and not necessitated. Hence science never demonstrates the systematic unity of nature: in the end it leaves us with a multiplicity of elements which are neither necessary in themselves nor organically connected with one another. At this point the man of science seeks to support his case by his further assumption. The causal series which he has so far traced cannot hang loose and unrelated; they must link up with each other and form a mechanical whole, and this whole is the ultimate and necessary ground of every occurrence in the parts. There could not, it is argued, be a determinate order in the parts unless there were a necessary order in the whole to explain it: observed uniformities must be grounded in

experienced world would not follow from the former apart from the latter.

and determined by the system which contains them.

At first blush the hypothesis appears plausible, but it does not stand the test of a searching criticism. The conclusion is not a convincing inference from the data. You cannot argue from uniformity to necessity unless uniformity implies necessity, and this is by no means evident. That the specific uniformities and connexions we observe in nature, or rather in small and selected portions of it, are necessarily bound up with the structure of the whole universe and pervade it throughout is a conjecture, and a conjecture we cannot verify. It may be a matter of greater or less probability, but like all inductive inferences it remains a probability. Nor can you say that the conception of nature as a system determined in all its parts is a postulate—in other words, a demand we make on nature in order that our experience may be intelligible. In truth our experience of the natural world is not incoherent, though much emerges within it which neither is nor can be mechanically determined. What is essential is, that the continuity implied in the activity of a rational mind which recognises itself in its changing experiences should have a counterpart in the processes of nature, if the mind is to understand and deal with them. Were there no uniformity, there could, of course, be no continuity. But the claims of con-

tinuity will be met if an event can be related to the situation in which it appears: it does not follow that it must be so determined by the situation and its conditions that it is the one and only possible issue. For practical purposes we do not require more than this.

At this stage I should like to examine an objection that might be raised. You have denied, it will be said, that nature forms a rigidly determined and self-contained system of interconnected causes and effects. But in the end can you banish necessity from the natural order? Granted that all the conditions are present, does not the effect necessarily follow? Would it not do away with all scientific reasoning if, in these circumstances, the consequence might ensue or might not?

In reply, let me point out that the case put forward is a hypothetical one, and you assume you are able to say that all the conditions required for the effect are present. You also assume that you are in a position to affirm that no conditions are operative which would nullify or modify the effect. In this supposed instance the effect would necessarily follow; but the proposition is really tautologous, for you have inserted in the premises what you bring out in the conclusion. The phrase 'all the conditions' means all the conditions necessary to the result, and therefore the result is

necessary. If a cause necessarily produces an effect, then, of course, the effect necessarily follows from the cause. But this proves nothing with regard to the natural order. The fact remains that in any specific conjunction of cause and effect it is not possible to prove that the given connexion is intrinsically necessary. All we have to go on is the uniformity of conjunction found in experience.

The point to note is, that an abstract hypothetical proposition like the foregoing does not decide anything in the concrete situations with which we have to deal in the natural world. For in such situations science is not able to specify exhaustively all the conditions, positive and negative, which will ensure the emergence of the effect. It has to content itself with a general working rule, which always leaves it possible that the general uniformity may be modified or suspended by the presence of other conditions or operative causes. When a complex situation A has uniformly yielded the effect B but fails to do so in a given instance, or yields C instead of B, the scientist sets out to seek for some neutralising condition or active cause X as an explanation. From the standpoint of scientific method this is quite legitimate. But what is not legitimate is to assume that nature forms a closed system of causes and effects, and that for every event in nature a natural cause must be assigned. This is a proposition about the

whole of nature which science, on its own grounds, is not justified in asserting; and there are reasons that ought to make us chary of admitting it.

At an earlier point in this paper we noted how the operation of human wills on nature was a fact which could not be brought within the scope of mechanical causation. But there are other facts in the realm of organic evolution which baffle the attempt to trace them to pre-existing natural causes. In the evolutionary process new beginnings are made, and variations are produced, that are not explicable in terms of rigid natural causation. Evolution, it is now evident, is not merely an inflexible movement which unfolds only what already pre-existed in germinal form. It is also epigenesis or creative development, in virtue of which results are brought about that are related to what has gone before and yet transcend explanation by reference to pre-existing elements. These new beginnings are prepared for, no doubt, but the fresh forward step is not accounted for by the preparation. Such fresh movements are sometimes described as creative synthesis. In a humble way this takes place when the seed out of its intrinsic resources brings forth variations which diverge from the strict type. The same creative synthesis appears when a new individual organism is formed from the fusion of the sperm and the ovum, or when the dim life of feeling and instinct breaks

into perception, or when perception in turn blossoms into the larger activity of rational intelligence. To find the sufficient reason of these wonderful developments in prior elements interacting with the environment seems impossible; and if this be so, it shows that within the system of nature agencies are at work not reducible to quantitative causes: in other words, the supernatural is immanent in the natural order. At each stage, it has been remarked, nature transcends itself in a way that seems a miracle when regarded from the lower stage. This serves to indicate that nature, represented in the form of a rigid and self-contained mechanism, is an abstraction of scientific thinking, which does not cover the facts revealed in our concrete experience of the natural world. The order of nature whose actual working we are acquainted with is not an order which precludes miracle in the sense in which we have defined miracle. Nor would the miraculous so defined do away with a reasonable continuity in the course of events or make nature unreliable. There is no obligation laid on us to suppose that some well-established uniformity in the behaviour of things is really nullified when a miracle takes place: it is always possible that the particular uniformity may be modified in its working through some inner change imposed on the elements within the sphere of its operation. A transcendent causality, Lotze

once remarked, might alter the inner states of things to which it had direct access; by means of this the working of the specific uniformity would be altered at the given point, though the principle itself was not set aside.[1] If we choose to call these uniformities laws, then the emergence of the supernatural implies no suspension of these laws but only their supplementation.[2] To put it in a word, a change in the inner character of the elements will bring about a change in their interactions, and so modify the observed uniformity which is a general statement of the form of these interactions. Such changes may be due to the action of a transcendent cause, if, as argued, the natural order does not exclude the action of such a cause.

Here, I think, we see the error of those who treat nature as a kind of enclosed mechanism which explains itself. For by so doing they are guilty of a double abstraction. In construing nature as a system of mechanism they ignore its concrete character and qualitative differences—differences which are not to be explained quantitatively. To reduce an object to its 'beggarly elements' is not to account for it. Secondly, in positing a sufficient ground for the phenomena of nature they proceed on a narrow and quite in-

[1] *Microcosmus*, vol. i. p. 451, Eng. trans.
[2] Cp. Siebeck, *Religionsphilosophie*, p. 217.

adequate basis. You cannot severely isolate the natural from the spiritual order, the realm of facts from the realm of ends and values; for the latter develops within the former and reacts upon it. If so, then the ultimate ground of the universe must be the sufficient ground of the kingdom of nature and the kingdom of souls. The two orders, we repeat, cannot be dualistically opposed or referred to diverse sources, for both are closely interwoven in the texture of human experience and interact with one another. And if spiritual ends and values are realised under natural conditions, the inner character of nature must be such that spirit can develop within it and express itself through it. The restriction which the uniform course of things imposes on human wills does not imply that free and active spirits cannot operate through their natural environment. Nor does it mean that personal agents are so determined that they cannot initiate new movements in the world.

Naturalism and Theism offer us two sharply contrasted views of the world and life. The former regards the natural order as fundamental, and suggests that the spiritual order somehow grew out of it. The latter maintains that the spiritual order is fundamental, and that the system of nature ultimately depends on a spiritual First Cause or Ground. In the end, Naturalism and

Theism run back to two contrasted valuations of experience which are not to be harmonised. The theist frankly takes his stand on the primacy of the spiritual; and he contends that, though it comes later in the process of development, it comes first in the order of value. For him, self-conscious personality is the highest category, and in the light of this conception he conceives the final ground of the universe to be a supreme and personal Spirit. He cannot, indeed, explain how God brings the world into being, but he can claim that in postulating God, who is the transcendent Ground of all other realities, he is postulating a Sufficient Reason. If you affirm that the natural order is the ground of the spiritual, you are assigning a reason which is obviously insufficient. I am not, however, concerned here to argue the case for Theism against Naturalism; but I wish to make clear that the theist can give a consistent justification for his faith in the presence of the supernatural in nature and human life. In this respect he is in a different position from the naturalist and the pantheist.

The supernatural, then, stands or falls with Theism. But some one may ask—Can you explain, or at least suggest, how Theism should lend support to the belief that the miraculous may emerge within the world-order? How exactly are we to interpret the action of a Divine Cause within

the natural system? One can only deal with this problem on the basis of a theory of the real character of the world which is revealed in experience. Here we are constrained to enter the debatable realm of metaphysics; and metaphysics, if it cannot demonstrate, can at least offer suggestions, and is justified in doing so. The organic world, as we know it, consists of a multitude of individuals more or less complex, each of which, we suggest, is built up of elements which are themselves individual and has a degree of being for itself. It is an admissible assumption that the principle of individuality extends downwards to the heart of nature. On this view the world is a graded system of individuals with a common basis and in living interaction one with another. The final ground of this interacting system is not in itself, but in the Divine Will on which it constantly depends, and whose organising activity is the ultimate reason why the world of experience is a unity or cosmos. On this view the key to the order of nature and life is not mechanical but teleological: its uniformity is based on the guiding and controlling operation of God. But this close and living dependence of all individuals on God carries with it the possibility of special divine influence, for the inner nature of each individual is accessible to the divine operation. For this reason God may work changes on or initiate new move-

ments within individuals directly, and this would induce modifications in their interactions with other individuals. Hence results may emerge due primarily to the action of God on the inner nature of things, and this change would affect the ordinary mode of their interaction with other things. The true explanation of such an event would be the activity of God, though it would not appear to be an external interference, but to stand in relation to the elements involved and the situation in which they were found. This harmonises with the view that in miracle the natural order is supplemented, not cancelled: the issue in this case need not contradict that order, though it would not be such as the natural order could of itself produce. Supplementation of this kind might occur at any grade of reality; but its significance would be deepest in the realm of personal and spiritual lives.

The disrepute into which miracles have fallen is largely owing to the habit of speaking of them as arbitrary interferences or suspensions of the uniformities of nature—uniformities which it is easy to see work in the long run for good, and are even presupposed in rational and moral conduct. Hence the argument that a miracle would mean that God undoes His own work. But this view, we have shown, misconceives the character of the miraculous, for that rests not on a suspension but

on a quickening of natural working. Moreover, it fails to recognise the true ground and scope of natural uniformities. That ground is not mechanical but teleological, and this teleology embraces in its operation the spiritual as well as the natural order. In a comprehensive teleological scheme, therefore, it is intelligible that the natural order should be subordinated to the spiritual, which comes first in the order of value. There need, accordingly, be nothing contradictory in the emergence of the supernatural within the natural course of things, provided its appearance is neither accidental nor capricious, but forms an element in that purpose of God which is realised both in the realms of nature and of spirit. Neither in the kingdoms of nature nor of the soul can a severe determinism rule, if the idea of providence is to have a religious value, if faith is to be an act of freedom, and if life is to be a personal test and a moral discipline.

There is nothing inconsistent in the belief that the supernatural element enters more largely into the texture of human experience than is commonly supposed. Those who are in earnest with the idea of a providential order will be disposed to believe that it does do so. Certainly you cannot, with the knowledge at your disposal, restrict its range in space and time, or treat it as the monopoly of a people or an age. Nor will a man's

insight always suffice to enable him to decide certainly, from a survey of the evidence, when a claim to miracle is to be endorsed and when it is to be rejected. There will often be a difficulty in determining whether that which is affirmed to be supernatural is not really natural. Is, for instance, a so-called faith-cure to be deemed supernatural? Or does the fact that it is only a specific instance of the recognised influence of mind on body entitle us to treat it as a merely natural occurrence? These questions would raise the further question, whether the faith was supernaturally quickened or intensified, or was the expression of normal human activities. In this case the patient might come to one conclusion and the psychologist to another. This possible uncertainty about the presence of the supernatural in a given instance will not disconcert us, if we remember that the true test of miracle lies deeper than the domain of external evidence.

In a sense faith is needed to apprehend miracle, for the mere fact that an event is extraordinary is no guarantee that it is miraculous. But, it will be said, this comes near to giving away the case for miracle; for, if it requires faith to recognise miracle, the truth may be that faith really creates miracle by the activity of the imagination which it provokes. Imagination, we admit, conjures into being signs and wonders, and by its free play "bodies

forth the forms of things unknown." Nor can we deny that many a miracle or legend has been the product of imagination, pious or otherwise. But the faith to which I am referring is not based on imagination: it is rooted in religious experience, and has for its object the God who transcends the world and manifests Himself in it. Such a faith, apprehending the movements of nature and the historic life in terms of spiritual value and purpose, finds at points within experience tokens of a divine and supernatural activity directed to the realisation of the good. Those who are without faith will be moved to interpret the facts differently; but those whose vision is illuminated by faith will discern a spiritual meaning and value in the issue of the situation which is an evidence of the creative and guiding will of God. I do not believe that, in a a specific instance, it will be possible to prove to a sceptical critic that a supernatural element has entered into the course of things; it will always be open to him to say that fuller knowledge would bring the facts within the scope of a natural explanation. On the other hand, in the absence of all conclusive objections to miracle, the way is open for the religious man to recognise the supernatural action of God where this interpretation finds a verification in his inner experience and sense of spiritual values. If this be so, it follows that the attempt to demon-

strate the claims of religion on the evidences of miracles will never bring universal conviction; for this procedure reverses the true order of things.[1] Religious faith is not engendered by miracle, but the assurance of miracle is born of the spiritual insight of faith.

From the Christian point of view the strongest assurance of the supernatural working of God in the historic life has been found in the life and character of Christ. Luther once said that all the words and works of Jesus were pure miracles, and many theologians find the supreme evidence of the supernatural in Christ's spiritual personality. And if the supernatural is admitted at this point, the case for its systematic elimination from experience must fail. The question is of paramount importance, because the manifestation of Christ in history is always regarded by Christians as the supreme instance of the revealing activity of God, and so becomes the testimony and illustration of the vital relation of the supernatural to a divine teleology. If the meaning of this 'strange eventful history' is the development of the natural into a truly spiritual order, then if the supernatural is organically related to this development it ceases to be an accident or an intrusion. For it becomes charged with ethical and spiritual meaning by

[1] As A. Sabatier says, it is hopeless to expect from science the attestation of any miracle. *Phil. de la Religion*, p. 85.

becoming an element in the realisation of a divine good.

Does the character of Christ support this faith in the reality of the supernatural within the historic life? The modern thinker who deals with this great problem cannot make the uncritical assumptions about the New Testament which an older generation of theologians had no difficulty in making. He cannot appeal to plenary inspiration, nor can he hope to compel assent by a parade of logical proofs. He is unable to create faith in this way, for faith must grow out of the religious experience which is its condition, though he can show how faith finds a justification for itself. The question thus raised has many issues, most of which I am not concerned to discuss—for instance, the theological interpretations which may be given to the person and work of Christ. I shall confine myself to a statement on the problem how far the historic Christ yields for religious faith an assurance of the presence of the supernatural in the world. Here, of course, I refer to His life and character, not to particular miracles that have been attributed to Him. The truth is growing clear, after all the criticism to which the New Testament has been subjected, that the Gospels are based on genuine historical traditions, and record the impression produced by Jesus. In the case of the Synoptic narratives no reasonable critic can doubt

that they tell us a great deal about the teaching and actions of Jesus when He lived on earth. The very fact that this literature should have grown up within two generations after His death attests the extraordinary influence of His personality; and it is utterly impossible that the characteristic portrait of Jesus could have been developed out of floating myths and legends. The Jesus of Matthew, Mark, and Luke is beyond doubt a historic figure, and not a composite product of the beliefs men came to hold about Him. The Synoptic Gospels are based on older documents and traditions, and they have been revised and edited. Here and there they may show signs of the influence of the growing church. But in the main they are a history of the things Jesus said and did. No other theory gives us a key to the historic situation. If this be so, one cannot evade the conclusion that a transcendent spiritual personality at this point emerged on the field of history, and by its intrinsic resources created a movement of the religious consciousness which is still living and active. Jesus is above all creative in the sphere of religion, and is the fresh source of a spiritual consciousness which pervades the historic life. The attempt to explain Christ through the ideas, influences, and mental environment of His age only succeeds up to a point, for you cannot build up the concrete personality out of any combination of the elements at your dis-

posal. That Jesus came forth by a kind of inner necessity from an age so spiritually destitute seems entirely improbable. The character does not so fit the environment that it can be regarded as its natural issue. There are, indeed, those who think otherwise: the difficulty, they would say, is one which exists in the case of other great personalities, and is simply due to our defective knowledge of the factors in the situation. Here, too, the full assurance of the miracle is born of faith, for only to the eye of a sympathetic faith is the unique greatness of Christ revealed. To appreciate the deeper significance of the 'fact of Christ' a man must enter the current of that religious life of which Christ is the fountain. Then the obscuring veil is lifted, and he discerns the seeking and saving activity of the transcendent God exercised on the souls of men. The individual for whom this has become a full assurance will not find it hard to believe that the God revealed in Christ is the continuous source of fresh spiritual movements which contribute to the fulfilment of His eternal purpose of good. There is nothing in the methods and results of science which invalidates this faith, and there is much in religious experience which demands it.

Those who have followed the line of thought in this paper will not, I hope, suppose that I have unduly magnified the importance of the miraculous.

It would, I feel sure, be a profound mistake to exalt belief in miracle into a kind of test, and to treat willingness to admit the supernatural as an unfailing index of the quality of a man's religion. For this is a survival of the antiquated doctrine that a man can be constrained by logic to enter the kingdom of heaven, and that a refusal to admit the validity of the scriptural evidences springs from some taint of original sin. Any acceptance of the supernatural to be spiritually significant must come through an active religious faith and find its verification there. But I do not think that religious conviction which is conscious of its own meaning can banish the supernatural from the world, or treat it as the figment of a creed outworn.

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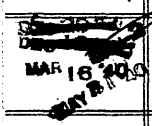

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